Multi-level politics and party change

a study of three British parties since devolution

Øivind Bratberg

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holder or the unit which grants the doctorate.

Til Ståle, som kunne løpt fra i svingen men ventet likevel – *à la Johnny Gray*.

PREFACE

This idea for this dissertation emerged from two different sources: a broad interest in British politics and a fascination for the role of parties during times of political reform. The latter point perhaps needs some elaboration. Parties may design reforms of the political system but in doing so they will often set in train processes with unforeseen effects on themselves. Of particular interest is the fact that parties are not only masters but also servants of the political institutions where they operate, often finding that elected representatives import cultures and interests which deviate from the parties' own. Moreover, parties themselves are carriers of historical compromises, ideological and organisational legacies which will often constrain and complicate attempts to change them. Following the creation of subnational legislatures, for example, the casual observer would expect parties to change, primarily by re-balancing the organisation towards the subnational level. Yet there is also reason to expect barriers between changes in the parties' environment and similar reforms within the parties themselves. One would imagine vested interests and historically embedded identities (as well as conflicting strategic calculations) to be mobilised against party change, especially when reallocation of power is on the table.

That speculation was the starting point of my doctoral research, which was directed towards political reforms underway in Britain. Here, subnational legislatures had been introduced in Scotland and Wales in 1999 through the process of devolution, whereas England, the larger constituent nation in the UK, had been granted no such autonomy. As part of the broader backdrop, the European Parliament had acquired a greater policy-making influence since the mid-1990s. What were the consequences for the territorial organisation of British parties? To what extent was a drift now evident towards more multi-

levelled parties, with a special role granted to Scottish and Welsh branches vis-à-vis the central party offices in London and with direct relations to the European level? Where internal barriers to such a development could be observed, how should they be conceptualised?

There are a number of people whom I am indebted to for being allowed to address these queries through to a dissertation. I would like to express my gratitude, first, to my supervisor, Professor Knut Heidar, for providing precisely the comments that were needed, *when* they were needed, despite a range of formal duties to perform. Without his encouragement and effective supervision the research project would not have taken off nor managed to fly properly. I would also like to thank Professor Øyvind Østerud, my co-supervisor, for stern leadership and steady support throughout the process. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Morten Egeberg, whom I had the pleasure to assist for years before the present project started. Without his kind encouragement and initial supervision I would never have dared venture into doctoral research, or an academic career, at all.

The Department of Political Science provided an excellent working environment throughout the period of research. I have been lucky to be part of an exceptionally warm-hearted cohort of PhD fellows. Among all these, I would like to thank Amund Lie for his highly valued friendship and for commenting on all works with academic expertise and an excellent sense of humour. Dag Einar Thorsen, Kristian Helland-Hansen, Stina Solhøy, Anders Jupskås, Aase Marthe Horrigmo, Tor Otterholt and Gudrun Østby should also be thanked in particular for a very pleasant community. Additionally, my gratitude goes to Knut-Andreas Christophersen for the opportunity to take part in the teaching of research methods over these four years, and to Professor Bernt Hagtvet for his unrivalled scholarly inspiration.

Outside the Department there are others who have been of great significance. I am particularly grateful to Juan Christian Pellicer, who has been a guide to the academic world, a great inspiration and a most formidable friend. I would also like to thank (and congratulate!) Pieter de Wilde, a dear fellow wanderer on the path to this degree, and to thank Trond Christian Anvik and Jon Hatlen for providing encouragement from earlier times onwards. Finally, I am grateful to Kristin M. Haugevik and Atle L. Wold for the communal efforts to establish British Politics Society, Norway and to Kristin in particular for all shared and inspiring projects underway. Within the circle of Norwegian scholars dealing with British politics, I would also like to thank Jan Erik Mustad, *the big fella*, for welcoming the young and aspiring in the field with such warmth.

The main share of the empirical work for the project was conducted through a series of interviews in Britain in 2008 and 2009, with parliamentarians and party staff in London, Edinburgh/Glasgow and Cardiff. I would like to express my gratitude to all interviewees. The combination of efficiency and hospitality that is genuinely British was prevalent in all these exchanges, which involved Members of Parliament, Welsh Assembly Members, regional party secretaries, election coordinators, liaison officers *et cetera*. At no point did anyone question the usefulness of a Norwegian novice studying the intricacies of British party organisation, nor did anyone shy away from providing information about the parties' inner life. Devolution has become a much researched topic during the past decade, and research on internal relations in parties can be sensitive. On this backdrop, some exhaustion on the part of interviewees would have been justified. However, a spirit of generosity was what prevailed.

As part of my research, I was also very lucky to be granted two rewarding research stays at the Department of Politics, University of Sheffield. I am very grateful to Professor Ian Bache for hosting the stays, for ensuring that I was introduced to the Department's scholarly activities (as well as to the moors of Derbyshire) and for providing marvellous help with the empirical analysis throughout 2009. I would also like to thank the evaluating committee – Professor Hanne Marthe Narud, Professor Kris Deschouwer and Dr. Jonathan Hopkin – for thoroughly assessing my dissertation.

Finally, I would like to express my warmest gratitude to my mother and father, Anna Marie and Bjørn, for providing the safest harbour and for teaching us the enjoyment of gardening and cooking, the significance of *Hamlets eplekake* and the distinction between *Astrakhan* and *Transparente Blanche*. In the end, nothing could matter more.

Lillestrøm, 28 November 2010

Øivind Bratberg

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ABSTRACT

Multi-level politics – the empowerment of, and interaction between, political actors at multiple territorial levels – has in later years been subject to increased attention in political science. Multi-levelness has been extensively scrutinised in the public administration literature. Meanwhile, research on political parties has only belatedly recognised that there are parallels in the processes of change traversed by party organisations. Parties operate in an environment where institutions at the regional and the European level rise in salience. How they respond in terms of internal (re)organisation is the topic of the present dissertation, which analyses three statewide British parties since the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales in 1999. This introductory chapter gives a thematic backdrop, by reviewing established findings in the literature and by offering a historical institutionalist framework for the analysis of party change in a multi-level environment. Finally, a reflection on methodology and research design is offered alongside a brief review of the empirical articles included in the dissertation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political parties in Europe have over the last decades been faced with significant changes in their environment – in the dominant cleavages, the role of the state and the competition with other forms of political activism (Katz and Mair 2009). One significant driver of change is the development towards increasingly multi-levelled politics. In a wider sense, there is nothing new in politics cutting across territorial levels. Local government is an integral part of all polities beyond the city state, and federal systems draw upon a constitutionally defined division of power between the federal state and its constituent territories.[1] However, developments in Europe since the late 1970s have served to highlight the territorial dimension in a number of European states. The transition involves two parallel processes – domestic *regionalisation* and *European integration* – both of which challenge the pre-eminence of the national level. As a consequence, parties which have grown and matured with the nation state must adapt to a context where decision-making authority is increasingly located outside its remit. The topic addressed in this dissertation is whether parties respond by reallocating power *internally* to align with a changing territorial structure. My empirical focus is the creation of subnational legislatures[2] in Britain and the stepwise enhancement of the powers of the European Parliament (EP). The research question could be formulated as follows:

> ***To what extent, and through what processes, does territorial reform of the state lead to similar reorganisation of political parties?***

Parties are faced with contradictory demands in responding to territorial reform. The dilemma is most obvious when it comes to regionalisation. The creation of subnational legislatures implies an acknowledgement that statewide actors are incapable of fully representing regional interests, and a party leadership which rejects this could be seen as negligent of the new democratic settlement (van Biezen and Hopkin 2006:16-18). On the other hand, there is a limit to how far decentralisation can run if parties are to remain credible statewide actors. Internal divergence is not a virtue if resulting in inconsistency and contradiction. Moreover, party elites will under normal circumstances be concerned not to support a process leading to state fragmentation. The need to acknowledge regional autonomy thus walks hand in hand with the need to maintain a cohesive party across the territory (cf. Roller and van Houten 2003). With regard to European integration, the challenge is somewhat different. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected from statewide parties but their parliamentary affiliation and the sticks and carrots available are cross-national (Hix 2002). Here, the challenge for statewide parties is as much about *effectiveness* as about legitimacy, as MEPs cannot be fully controlled by statewide party elites. However, as with regionalisation, there may be normative barriers against delegating power if statewide representation and national unity are seen to be more legitimate than legislatures below or above the national level.

Evidently, parties are not passive victims of state reform. Regionalisation is a process voted through by a political majority and subject to parliamentary approval, and the EP has been strengthened only as a consequence of inter-governmental agreements. Yet, once legislatures are created, they introduce a dynamic of invested resources and claims to legitimacy outside the statewide political arena. Parties which are ideologically committed to

a unitary state may continue taking cues from the statewide party leadership, but one would expect autonomy to be yielded to party branches at regional elections (van Houten 2009). Overall, a basic expectation would be that parties respond to territorial reform by (re)aligning organisational structures with the structure of the state, understood here as the formal allocation of power and requirements for interaction between the national and the regional level of government. The realities of party change however suggest that the process is more complex: parties respond to decentralisation by different forms and degrees of organisational change, often (but not exclusively) in line with party policy concerning the state structure. There are various theoretical schools which could account for these differences. This dissertation draws upon historical institutionalism (HI), where explanation is sought in the historical trajectory of the individual party. In particular, what will be highlighted are the organisational and ideational legacies providing the point of departure for party change. There have been few attempts in the literature on political parties to draw lines to institutionalist theory. However, parties like other organisations in the public sphere can be conceptualised as institutions: indeed, to a larger extent than most organisations, parties supply their members with a clear set of inherited norms (Peters 1999:112-14). To paraphrase a classical tenet, party reformers make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choosing; dead generations weigh as heavily on political parties as on other actors in political life.[3]

While the research topic extends to party politics in multi-level polities across Europe, the empirical analysis is limited to the study of three statewide parties in Britain[4] since devolution, that is, the creation in 1999 of the Scottish Parliament (with primary legislative and limited tax-varying powers) and the National Assembly for Wales (with

secondary legislative and no tax-varying powers). In *part two* of this introductory chapter I discuss how the dependent variable, parties' internal allocation of power across territorial levels, can be operationalised. *Part three* gives a brief summary of existing literature on multi-level parties (MLPs), taking as starting point how they have been analysed in federal systems and then evaluating the literatures on party response to regionalisation and European integration. In *part four*, I elaborate a historical institutionalist perspective on party change and formulate two rival hypotheses. The *fifth part* of the chapter discusses methodological choices; I then summarise the empirical articles included in the dissertation in *part six* before the chapter is concluded with a brief assessment of the hypotheses in *part seven*.

2. MEASURING ALLOCATION OF POWER IN THE MLP: *CENTRALISATION VS. STRATARCHY*

A general definition of the MLP could be *a party organisation with multiple lines of accountability and a division of authority between relatively autonomous party sections below and/or above the national level*.[5] This definition focuses on the *organisational* dimension of parties. The operationalisation of power is conventional: in a party, power concerns control over output in the form of candidate and leadership selection, campaigning and policy formulation. According to Carter et al. (2007:10), "those who have power within a party can decisively influence what a party stands for, how it competes in different electoral arenas, and who will be elected to party and public offices". Indicators such as the *selection of candidates*, *formulation of manifestos*, *control over finances* and *organisation of*

campaigns provide comparative information about where power resides in a party. Measuring the dependent variable thus implies investigating where in the party control over these activities is located and to what extent that control changes hands over time.

There is little consensus in the literature with regard to which, if any, of the indicators above is primordial to the territorial allocation of power in a party. While some contributions focus on one indicator only – such as candidate selection (Lundell 2004) or manifestos (Mazzoleni 2009) – others combine the indicators pragmatically (Hopkin 2003, Laffin et al. 2007). Regional control over candidate and leadership selection is sometimes seen as decisive to party decentralisation; however, regional candidate selection could be merely symbolic without sufficient autonomy on policy formulation and manifestos.[6] In the dissertation, the indicators of power allocation I apply are considered to be additive. The basic dimension to which they contribute runs from *centralisation* to *stratarchy* (Laffin et al. 2007). Where regional party branches are granted enhanced power over candidates, manifestos, finances and/or campaigns, we may infer that change towards a more stratarchical party has occurred. Stratarchy is the opposite of hierarchy, referring to a federal division of responsibility between commanding military generals (OED 2010). The idea of multiple lines of accountability and a federal relationship between levels of command give stratarchy analytical leverage *vis-à-vis* decentralisation, which is a general term referring to increased dispersal of authority or responsibility. At the opposite end of the axis centralisation is preferred to hierarchy; the latter has particular connotations to ecclesiastical or inter-personal rather than intra-organisational relationships (ibid.). Thus, we arrive at the dichotomy of centralisation vs. stratarchy. This is the basic dimension along which I assess the territorial allocation of power in a party organisation.

A caveat may be added to this conventional understanding of power allocation in parties. Power can be indirect and relational rather than direct and observable (Poguntke and Webb 2005). For example, the endorsement of specific regional leaders and candidates by the statewide party leadership may be highly significant to subnational politics, as witnessed by candidate selection for the devolved legislatures in Britain (Bradbury et al. 2000). In prosaic terms, the opportunity for regional branches to chart a separate course – be it in terms of policy or personnel – must be acted upon in order to yield substantial results. More philosophically, an exhaustive analysis of the MLP requires a scope which includes the interpretative side of party politics – the issue of *how* and *why* a regional party branch differentiates itself from the statewide party and what implications this may have for policies and for the actors involved (Moon and Bratberg 2010). Article two and four in the dissertation follow this lead to some extent, the former in examining the relationship between Welsh Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs), the latter in analysing how policy divergence between England and Scotland is reflected in party rhetoric. These two articles take a tentative step towards investigating how the *meaning* attached to the political process mediate the changing opportunity structures created by devolution.[7]

2.1. Autonomy and influence

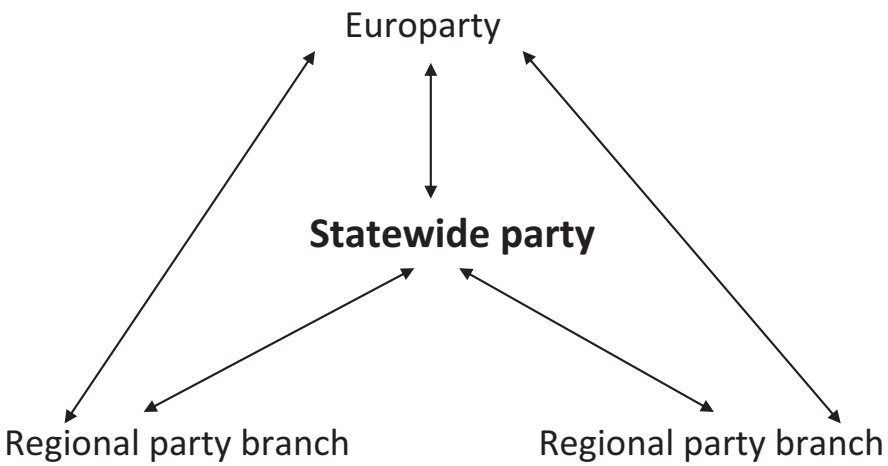
In line with the conception of stratarchy, an organisation could be seen as decentralised "to the extent that discretion and authority to make important decisions are delegated by top management to lower levels of executive authority" (Simon et al. 1954:1). Moreover, the degree of decentralisation is greater the more decisions are made lower down the hierarchy

and the more important those decisions are (Dale 1952:149-50).[8] This is useful as a point of departure, but it emphasises merely the autonomy of lower levels to make decisions within their remit. What should also be included in our understanding of stratarchy is the degree to which regional party branches are acknowledged as constituent units in the party and thereby permitted influence over decisions made at the centre. Regional party branches will, in order to strengthen their position in the overall party, have an interest both in maximising their *autonomy from* and their *influence over* the statewide party, particularly where the structure of the state requires close interaction for example through regional representation in the upper house of the statewide legislature (Swenden and Maddens 2009c:268). Hence the strength of regional branches could thus be measured both by their autonomy from the centre and their influence over joint affairs (Moon and Bratberg 2010). An instructive example of enhanced influence would be where party change secures regional branches representation at the governing board of the statewide party. A similar logic applies to the relationship between the statewide party and its party group in the EP: autonomy denotes the leeway to decide upon candidate selection, manifestos, campaigns and finances in relation to the EP; influence means the capacity to impact upon the European policy development, manifesto and campaigns of the statewide party and to be granted positions in the governing structures of the organisation. Integrating the intra-party relationships below and above the national level in a joint conception of the MLP is thus a way of analysing parties as they emerge from the processes of regionalisation and European integration.

Separate spheres of authority and multiple lines of accountability are characteristic of the MLP (figure 1.1). The issue of authority implies that regional party branches and the EP

party group will enjoy a certain organisational autonomy (and thus control various indicators of power), a certain influence over the statewide party. The issue of accountability implies that regional party branches are responsible partly towards their own members and voters and partly towards the statewide party organisation. In organisational terms, the EP party group is partly accountable to the statewide party, partly to the Europarty in which it is integrated and partly to the regional branches from which MEPs are recruited. Europarties are the party federations at the European Union (EU) level to which statewide parties are affiliated and which thus constitute the political platform for legislative work in the EP (Bardi 1994, Delwit et al. 2001).

Figure 1.1: The party as a multi-level organisation (arrows signifying lines of accountability)[9]



3. PARTIES AND TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE: A BRIEF LITERARY REVIEW

The rise of alternative sources of power below and above the national level has generated research from several theoretical traditions. A great number of these contributions are grounded in the public administration literature and guided by the concept of multi-level governance (MLG). MLG combines a focus on multiple territorial levels with the perceived transition from government to governance, where regulatory policies are increasingly delegated to agencies, the market and the voluntary sector (Hooghe and Marks 2001, Bache and Flinders 2005). Grounded in the practice of public sector institutions, governance is not a concept to be readily adapted to political parties. However, the *multi-levelness* highlighted by MLG has a broader relevance, and it is therefore surprising to see that consciousness of territorialisation was long amiss in the party literature (Hopkin 2003, Deschouwer 2006). Other debates have occupied more scholarly attention by addressing a number of perceived challenges to political parties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, Gunther et al. 2002). Membership decline and falling activism have been seen as tokens of falling legitimacy. Debates have multiplied over the traditional forms of representative democracy and the role of parties in it, an issue of relevance across Europe but particularly prevalent in Britain (Poguntke 2002, Crick 2005, Stoker 2006, Hay 2007).

In later years, however, an empirical literature on MLPs has emerged. Decentralising reform of the state – exemplified by Belgium, Spain, Italy, France and Britain – has taken these polities closer to federal systems by creating legislatures below the national level. Thus the scope for territorial cleavages has expanded – both as potential friction within the statewide parties and as a battle between parties committed to the integrity of the state and

ethno-regionalist parties advocating further regionalisation. Running in parallel with this development, European integration has affected the way parties operate domestically and tied them closer to Europarties (Kreppel 2001, Ovey 2001). EU membership creates a new set of opportunity structures and commitments. The rising prominence of the EP could lead to a pressure towards detachment of party groups from national capitals, as policies are increasingly developed and agreed in the EP. In sum, multi-level politics conveys a dilution of political authority formerly vested in the nation state. In order to understand these processes, given their relatively short history, a brief consideration of how parties organise in federal systems is appropriate. Below I will provide this, and then review established findings with regard to party organisation under regionalisation and European integration.

3.1. Parties in federal systems

> *The basic political fact of federalism is that it creates separate, self-sustaining centers of power, privilege, and profit which may be sought and defended as desirable in themselves, as means of leverage upon elements in the political structure above and below, and as bases from which individuals may move to places of greater influence and prestige in and out of government.*[10]

The literature on parties in federal systems is extensive (Truman 1955; Chandler and Chandler 1987; Hrbek 2004), even if there is little theoretical reflection on *the dynamic of party reform*, that is, whether and how territorial reform of the state engenders party change (Heidar 2007). The legal definition of a federal system is that federal and regional

jurisdictions are constitutionally defined, that constituent territories (regions/states) are ensured representation at the federal level, that there are specified thresholds for constitutional reform and a neutral arbiter to resolve conflict over competencies (Swenden 2006:9-10). The origin could be a set of geographical entities which unite – as was the case with the United States – or the federation could emerge through decentralisation, whereby

> *the powers of the central government [will be] devolved upon the subordinate bodies in such a way that both central and regional units are thenceforth endowed with certain powers and functions of which neither can be deprived by the other.*[11]

Federal systems are characterised by constitutional differentiation between a regional and a federal level, each with separate accountability to the electorate through distinct electoral arrangements. Some powers are reserved to the regions, but the federal level retains the ultimate authority over a set of key policy areas such as foreign policy, defence and monetary policy (Watts 1998). Beyond the core of definitional characteristics there are important differences between federal systems with regard to division of tasks and the formal relationship between the federal and the regional level. Within the literature, a distinction is usually drawn between cooperative (or functional) federalism on the one hand and dual (jurisdictional) federalism on the other. *Cooperative* federalism follows the German model, supported by a functional division of labour: primary legislation is created at the centre, while implementation is mainly the responsibility of the regional level. Within this system, regional executives are represented in the federal upper house, which makes internal consensus evermore important for the parties involved. Cooperative federalism is

characterised by bargaining and territorial interdependence within and across parties. Parties operating under cooperative federalism learn to integrate tightly to defend their interests effectively at the federal level: this is confirmed by the German case (Renzsch 2004:27). *Dual* federalism, by contrast, encourages institutional separation rather than fusion. Instead of a functional division of labour between legislation and implementation, competencies are divided by policy domain. Both territorial levels legislate and implement within domains of their jurisdiction: competencies are thus defined mainly by sector, and government institutions are duplicated on a smaller scale in each of the constituent regions (Chandler and Chandler 1987:93). This prepares the ground for a political system with clear borders between the federal and regional level. Separate rather than joint powers are a key principle of dual federalism. Within the parties, this typically results in a high degree of autonomy and loose structures for coordination (Thorlakson 2009:159). Canada and the United States are ideal-typical examples of systems based upon dual federalism.

As a constitutional framework, federalism clearly enhances the scope for internal diversity. A common claim in the literature is furthermore that the form of federal arrangements structure the way in which parties organise (Chandler and Chandler 1987:89). Germany is perhaps the best example: since the process of legislation cuts across the distinction between federal and regional, political parties adapt by similarly close *organisational* integration between the two levels (Heidar 2007). Electoral politics also reflects this, in terms of political recruitment as well as coordinated coalition alignments at the regional level (although the latter has started to diversify in later years – cf. Detterbeck and Jeffery 2009:67). Federal parties are thus *cooperative* ventures in Germany, whereas federalism in Canada favours a *dual* approach to party organisation, with more limited

interaction, clearer internal demarcation of competencies and less extensive recruitment between the levels. In this general sense, then, *party organisation reflects the distinctive ways in which federal systems are structured*. The validity of this assumption has also been proven when it comes to centralism vs. stratarchy. Thorlakson (2009), for example, examines the relationship between state structure and party organisation across seven federations and finds that centralised states (with a greater share of public revenues and expenses controlled by the federal level) display more centralised political parties; that is, parties granting less autonomy to regional branches (Thorlakson 2009:170).[12]

William Riker (1964:137) gave a particular twist to this argument: as party structures typically reflect federal structures, the former should count as an *indicator* of the degree of federal centralisation. As empirical research has shown, however, reality is more complex. Party structures are not a simple consequence of the way the state is organised, but over time, development supports the hypothesis that specific federal systems encourage special organisational forms. The German parties are paradigmatic examples, starting afresh under the federal system after the Second World War yet with ideological baggage from previous eras in German politics. The social democratic SPD carried a past as a heavily centralised party with direct hierarchical links to the local level, while the Christian democratic CDU originated in the postwar era at the *Land* level, before establishing the federal party in 1950 (Detterbeck and Jeffery 2009:69). Both legacies have continued to permeate the parties. SPD developed formal party branches at the *Land* level as late as the 1960s, and the tension over competencies has continued between *Land* and district branches. CDU, while strengthening the federal level's coordinating capacity, over the last four decades, is still characterised by multiple regional voices on policy and organisation (ibid.). The postwar development of the

two dominant German parties is one of convergence – from centralism to federalism in SDP, from confederalism to federalism proper in CDU (although the latter has maintained a confederal relationship with CSU which represents the movement in Bavaria) (Gabriel 1989:67). In later years, the argument has been made that the preconditions of the closely integrated German party system are weakening. Regional disparities, separate interests and federal-regional detachment are features which are reflected also in the operation of parties. Renszch (2004:199) adds the significance of European integration and globalisation to this perspective: regional interests are increasingly viewed as stretching *beyond* rather than *within* the frame of the federal state. In a context of multiple territorial levels, politics is becoming denationalised.

3.2. Parties and regionalisation

With regard to party organisation, how does federalism compare with the regionalised political systems which have emerged in a number of European states since the 1980s? Traditionally, parties in unitary states have been analysed in a separate literature from party organisation in federal systems. Party politics in regionalised states has fallen between the categories, as the conventional view of parties as unitary, hierarchically structured organisations was rarely questioned in party research within Europe. The lacuna was addressed by Hopkin (2003) and Deschouwer (2003, 2006), who proposed clearer conceptualisation and enhanced attention to parties' territorial dimension. A cascade of empirical studies has followed since. Research has looked at electoral politics as well as party organisation, increasingly from a comparative perspective (Hough and Jeffery 2006,

Swenden and Maddens 2009a). Moreover, a string of individual case studies have added to the stock of knowledge on parties and territorial reform, with Britain, Belgium and Spain providing much of the data (Brzinski 1999, Swenden 2002, Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Fabre 2008, Hopkin 2009). This territorial turn in the literature also implies that the analytical distinction between federalised and regionalised is no longer clear-cut: this has, interestingly, been a conventional argument in the MLG literature (Hooghe and Marks 2003).

The empirical research on parties in regionalised states can be summarised in a few key observations. First, the delegation of power from the national level *is* generally followed by decentralisation within the parties. Secondly, in line with findings from the federalism literature, where subnational legislatures are created it often takes time for parties to reform and decentralise their organisations along similar lines. Thirdly, there is considerable scope for idiosyncrasies underway, depending on ideology, party leadership and entrepreneurship (Swenden and Maddens 2009b:14-15, Thorlakson 2009). In terms of how parties adapt their organisational structures, there are clear parallels between the federalism and regionalism literatures. The trajectory of the parties in Spain gives an interesting parallel to the development in federal Germany. As in the German case, there has been organisational convergence between the two dominant parties, one of which, the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP), carries a strongly centralist legacy, whereas the other, the social democratic *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), has drawn heavily on regional strongholds and a party structure closer to stratarchy. The historical backdrop is particular to Spain. PSOE emerged from the Franco era to rebuild the party from regional strongholds and chieftains and with an ideology of regional autonomy. PP is radically different in carrying the torch of centralism inherited from the conservative right (Fabre and Méndez-Lago

2009:116). There is a strong parallel within each of the parties between territorial structure preferred for the state and the principles upon which the parties themselves are structured (ibid.). This confirms the argument that debates on the balance of power between central and regional government is reproduced within the parties, as a struggle over how competencies and tasks should be allocated (Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010).

3.3. Parties and European integration

While parties are essential vehicles of representation at the national level they are only marginal actors in the EU, where policy is made by the triumvirate of the Commission, the EP and the Council. Governing parties may influence national positions in the Council, and in the EP they are present through their MEPs: however, influence even over the MEPs is not exclusive, as they are also accountable to Europarties. The *input* that national parties contribute to the EU system is therefore limited. Meanwhile, at the other end of the cycle, the *output* from EU policy processes is of obvious significance to them. Statewide parties see their own scope for action constrained by EU policies which commit member states to specific courses of action. Thus, parties are deeply affected by the EU yet incapable of directly affecting its decisions.

Much of the recent literature on EU and its member states is structured by the concept of Europeanisation – that is, "change and adaptation which is understood to be a consequence of the development of the European Union" (Ladrech 2002:389–90). Europeanisation highlights the *response* of actors and institutions to the changes in their environment that the EU has incurred through expansion and deepening from the mid-1980s

onwards (ibid.:393).[13] A recent, comparative study by Poguntke et al. (2007) finds limited change in parties as a result of European integration. The little change there is supports the hypothesis that European integration has led to a weakening of party activists and empowerment of elites. This is accelerated when the party is in government (Raunio 2002). According to Ladrech (2007:948-49), "parties have essentially isolated the EU within the broad range of their activities and in effect have 'outsourced' EU-related policy and decision-making to unelected advisers and experts, whose actions are legitimated only by party elites in government". European integration, it seems, adds a final element to the "iron law of oligarchy", ensuring that a small elite shares the spoils of power.[14]

In the EP, an arena where parties could exert some influence, there are only rare attempts by statewide parties at reining in their MEPs. The work within the EP is largely detached from domestic politics and generates other commitments and loyalties. MEPs enact their parliamentary role on a double mandate, representing the home parties that select them as well as the Europarties that control committee assignments, speaking time and policy initiatives in the EP (Hix 2002:688-89). Rather than monitoring the ongoing activities of their MEPs, parties concentrate on ensuring that suitable candidates are selected (Raunio 2000). Labour, interestingly, represents one of the most conspicuous efforts at tying the MEPs closer to the party at home. In return for enhanced control by the statewide party over MEPs, the latter are granted influence over policy development in London. This "link system" is however dependent on the party being in government, as the key property of the system is the exchange between policy spokespersons in the EP and ministerial teams in London (Messmer 2003).

A final side of Europeanisation, particularly apt given the analytical focus of the dissertation, is the potential empowerment of regional party branches. There are multiple examples in the literature today of how the regional level seeks to promote its interests at the European scene (Jeffery 1997, 2000, Marks et al. 2002, Tatham 2008). This literature has predominantly been occupied with the executive arm of regional government, although liaison and representation of subnational legislatures have also been examined (Kiiver 2006, Raunio and Wright 2006).[15] The parallel which this literature invites is whether regional party branches parties follow a similar path to that of regional executives. Tatham (2008:504) suggests that the EP could be "an effective channel to promote sub-state interests within the EU arena, especially when MEPs are elected on the basis of regional constituencies". Going a step further, we should also investigate whether the parallel to the *bypass thesis* of MLG has any relevance to political parties (figure 1.1, p. 9). Could Scottish and Welsh party branches go as far as establishing their own relationship with European party groups, autonomous from the statewide party elites? Each of the processes of regionalisation and European integration sketched above merits further research attention. Hitherto, attempts at combining domestic regionalisation and European integration in research have been few and far between (Brinzski 1999, Magone 2003, McGarry and Keating 2006, article 3 in this dissertation). This is an area which should be subject to further study in the fledgling empirical research on MLPs.

4. EXPLAINING (THE FORM AND EXTENT OF) PARTY CHANGE

Research on territorial reform and party change in Europe has found limited scope for generalisation. According to a recent, authoritative study of territorial politics in Europe, "there is no grand theory to explain the organizational or campaign strategies of statewide parties which operate in a multilevel electoral context" (Swenden and Maddens 2009c:268). Various mediating variables have been proposed to account for party organisational change. *Government incumbency* has some explanatory leverage, but is a context-specific feature relevant only to a minority of parties at a given time.[16] More pertinently, *party family* is often raised as the most significant intervening variable. Detterbeck and Hepburn (2010:124) contend that parties on the left are more disposed to decentralise power internally, whereas Swenden and Maddens (2009b:23) argue that the difference runs between liberal and Christian democratic parties (which are stratarchically disposed) and social democratic and conservative parties (which have a preference for centralisation). The same authors later concede that party family merely provides a tentative idea of party position on the centralisation vs. stratarchy axis (2009c:260-63). In later years, moreover, too many parties have changed their approach for party family to be a stable predictor. Conservative parties have, in several cases, changed from unitary organisations towards enhanced recognition of regional branches; social democrats have, on their part, moved from positions as essentially centralised parties in the era of welfare state development towards a regionalist (as well as Europeanist) agenda.[17]

Party policy about the appropriate structure of the state has been mentioned repeatedly as an explanatory variable of party organisation. However, policies could emerge

alongside party organisational change rather than being analytically prior to it. More convincingly, I will argue below, explanations of the degree and form of party change should look back to the *organisational* and *ideational legacies* of each party with regard to territorial allocation of power. In order to establish this perspective we need a baseline reference. The rationalist perspective discussed below elaborates how party change should proceed if parties respond instrumentally to changes in their environment.

4.1. The rationalist perspective[18]: adaptive reform

In a survey article of the empirical literature on party change, Harmel (2002) uses the relative emphasis upon external and internal causes as a criterion for a threefold typology. Harmel distinguishes between:

- explanations referring to **system-level trends** to which all parties in a given system at a given time are exposed;
- explanations grounded in the **life cycle** shared by all parties of a similar origin
- explanations of **discrete change**, which draw upon a combination of external and internal causes to account for change in individual parties.

The first of these categories, the system-level trends approach, draws upon the premise that parties in a system are subject to a set of shared challenges to which they respond through organisational reform. Hence, when requirements change, convergence around new organisational models is to be expected to ensure survival and facilitate success. This approach comprises several of the classics in political party research. The mass party of

Duverger (1951), Kirchheimer's catch-all party (1966), Panebianco's electoral-professional party (1988) and Katz and Mair's cartel party (1995) broadly subscribe to explanations by way of system-level trends. Parties respond to social, economic and technological change by adapting their organisation accordingly: change is often gradual but it is rational in form and result. An instructive example is Duverger (1951), who observed how conservative and liberal parties adopted the organisational model cultivated by socialist mass organisations to secure the necessary manpower and organisational base for electioneering. The result was convergence around the mass party template, seen as most efficient for the postwar epoch of mass mobilisation. Similarly, the cartel party (Katz and Mair 1995) sums up a set of shared qualities characterising parties in a post-ideological, post-mass mobilisation era where parties have become professionalised and embedded in the state apparatus.

System-level trends denote long-term processes as the usual source of change, assuming that the costs of non-adaptation will be steadily growing till a threshold is reached (Harmel 2002:133).[19] The belief in adaptation to changing environmental demands is a hallmark of rationalism (Pierson 2000b). In the context of political parties, the relationship between state and party structure in federal systems chimes well with a rationalist approach. If we accept the assumption that parties seek to maximise electoral support, the intuitive optimising strategy with regard to territorial strategy is to shadow the structure of the state. Furthermore, if parties are perceived as unitary and rational actors, alignment of state and party structures should be expected to occur swiftly in response to state reform. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) see the allocation of power in parties as responsive to where power is located in the state. If authority is increasingly concentrated in the capital, parties follow suit in their internal allocation of power. Should the development be reversed, one

would expect that parties adapt accordingly, in line with the predominance under federalism of "loose, non-programmatic catch-all formations that can accommodate divergent regional interests" (Chandler and Chandler 1987:89). Decentralisation of the parties should thus be seen as a logical consequence of the changing territorial structure of the federation. According to Eldersveld, in his classic account of MLPs:

> *[T]he party must cope with widely varying local milieus of opinion, tradition, and social structure, and this encourages the recognition and acceptance of local leadership, local strategy, local power… Thus, a kind of 'balkanization' of power relations occurs, with variations in the extent of autonomy in middle and lower hierarchical strata from one habitat to the next.*[20]

From this vantage point, the hierarchical party structure is unworkable within the framework of federalism. In its place, Eldersveld (1954:9) postulates an egalitarian division of labour between territorial levels: such delegation of organisational command is seen as enabling proximity and adaptability to different electoral circumstances. An interesting application to the contemporary, multi-level environment is given by Carty (2004). Here, organisational authority is geographically dispersed and responsibilities between the central party and subnational units resemble a franchise: the former provides "the basic product line" whereas the latter are responsible for "delivering the product" on the ground (Carty 2004:9,11). In line with the franchise metaphor, parties can display different faces, policies and coalition partners while maintaining an overarching unity with the federal party. The party as a whole enjoys the benefits of an acknowledged brand which is fine-tuned to

different territorial contexts. In terms of a territorialisation of politics, the franchise or stratarchical party as conceptualised by Eldersveld (1964) and Carty (2004) comes close to the ideal-type party organisation as seen from the rationalist perspective. Such adaptation is not constrained to developments within the state: Brzinski's (1999) study of party strategy in Belgium provides an instructive example of how the creation of formal opportunity structures below and above the national level – through federalisation and the strengthening of the European Parliament – has spurred party organisational change and empowered the subnational and European level of the parties.

I should conclude this brief review by returning to the argument that rational parties do not *have to* reorganise in response to decentralising reform of the state. In parties which are strongly committed to statewide unity (and where this is reflected in a hierarchical allocation of power), there will often be strong resistance against organisational reform. This could be the case not only among party elites, but also among activists, members and voters. If so, could not the maintenance of a centralised organisation be a rational response? Although this argument is defensible in theory, it is difficult to see how it could be sustainable in practice. The claim that regional branches in the party are not trusted by the centre will be an easy accusation to make: likewise, where subnational legislatures are endowed with a separate electoral mandate it is difficult to see how a party can mount a defence for sustained command from the centre. Hence, in a regionalised state, it is a reasonable claim that rationalism suggests a stratarchical party organisation. Rationalism in the form sketched above leaves aside many complicating factors, but for heuristic purposes, it serves the theoretical discussion well. HI, as we will see, has less to offer in terms of parsimony but much to reflect upon in terms of supplementing the rationalist perspective.

4.2. The historical institutionalist perspective

According to HI, parties – as other organisations – do respond to environmental demands. The question is what *mediates* between environmental stimuli and organisational change, based on the credo that rationalist explanation is incomplete (Pierson 2004:131). *Vis-à-vis* theories on party change, a linkage could be drawn to what Harmel refers to as the discrete change approach. Here, organisational change is seen to arise from the interaction of external and internal causes, with a leadership grasping the opportunity for reform created by external stimuli (Harmel 2002:127-28). This approach to party change is less disposed to generalisation as it is typically concerned with explaining processes of change in individual parties rather than across a party system or among all parties of a certain origin.

Harmel and Janda (1994:265) differentiate between external causes of varying importance, claiming that the most important stimuli are those that leads a party to evaluate is effectiveness in meeting its primary goal, whether that is electoral success or other ambitions. Environmental stimuli of this radical kind can engender organisational change that cuts deeper and is more extensive than what could have been created by internal factors alone. Their analysis leans upon the perception of parties as following different primary goals, typically distinguished as vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking (Strom 1990). Appleton and Ward (1997) on their part argue that environmental stimuli are not always related to party goals. *Periodic* stimuli (longer-term, systemic causes with threshold effects) and *accidental* stimuli (sudden incidents disrupting the balance of power in the party) can each in their own way be causes of change. Moreover, between environmental stimuli and party change there are important mediating variables: *party factionalism* (cohesive leadership increases probability of reform), *institutionalisation* (low

institutionalisation increases probability of reform) and *system fragmentation* (high system fragmentation increases probability of reform) (Appleton and Ward 1997:344-47).

Both these contributions are consistent with Swenden and Maddens' (2009c:268) observation that parties respond differently to decentralising reform of the state. My own analysis is close to Appleton and Ward's approach, but I will argue that with regard to territorial reform, the set of mediating variables must be revised. First, party factionalism is ambiguous when it comes to territorial allocation of power. Should factionalism also take into account elite alliances across territorial levels? Does cohesive leadership imply cross-level consensus on the direction and extent of reform? In this thesis I substitute *leadership/entrepreneurship* for the party factionalism variable. Secondly, with regard to party system fragmentation, it is not clear what the significance of different subnational systems might be. It is conceivable that pressure to decentralise will increase in territories where the party enjoys particularly strong support, but not necessarily so. I therefore choose to omit party system fragmentation from my model. In the view I will put forward, it is institutionalisation in the form of *organisational and ideational legacies* that provides the most fruitful variable mediating between territorial reform and party organisational change (cf. Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Fabre 2008, Hopkin 2009).

According to HI, similar stimuli can lead to very different outcomes depending on features that are endogenous to the individual organisation (cf. March and Olsen 2006a:8). A party that is institutionalised becomes, in the eyes of its members and supporters, increasingly detached from instrumental utility, less oriented towards performance goals and more towards maintenance of the identities attached to the organisation (Selznick 1957:17, Jaffee 2001:227). The party's purpose is redefined towards consolidation;

evaluation of performance becomes less transparent and interests invested in the status quo stronger (Panebianco 1988:53, Appleton and Ward 1997:348). March and Olsen (2006b:691) define an institution as a "relatively stable collection of rules and practices, embedded in structures of *resources* that make action possible […] and structures of *meaning* that explain and justify behavior" (italics in the original). The context of a party organisation is a fitting one: control over candidate selection, formulation of manifestos, finances etc. provide resources while ideational legacies constitute structures of meaning which pin down and justify the allocation of power in the party. Unlike other types or organisations, the effectiveness and responsiveness of parties are put to the test through the ballot paper rather than through customer loyalty, public acknowledgement or other tokens of approval. However, in each of its functions, such as recruiting members, developing policy, seeking voters' support, attaining office and implementing policies, parties display similar qualities to those of civil society organisations or business corporations (although the *combination* of qualities that parties represent may be unique) (Schlesinger 1984, Jaffee 2001:208-10).

4.2.1. Historical institutionalism and party change

In the relatively small literature on party change, parties are typically conceived as fundamentally conservative when it comes to reforming ideological position as well as organisational structures (Harmel and Janda 1994:261-62). Parties are, in the words of Wilson (1980:532) "shielded from the impact of a changing environment by the force of tradition". The few deviations from this pattern typically occur in relation to performance crises or other types of external shocks and windows of opportunity for reform, concepts

which lean heavily on institutionalist perspectives (Egeberg 2003). Panebianco (1988:18-19) draws a distinction between the party organisation as a *rational model* vs. a *natural system*: moving from the former to the latter is precisely what occurs when a party is institutionalised. An institutionalised party is dominated by consolidation and interests invested in the status quo. However, the tension remains between *offensive* strategies towards fulfilment of party goals (characteristic of younger parties) and *defensive* strategies to protect the acquired status of elites and professionals in the party.

HI emerged as part of the turn to institutions in the political science literature from the 1980s. Summarised under the heading of new institutionalism, these contributions aimed at refocusing attention towards the structural and normative context in which decision making occurs (March and Olsen 1984, 1989). Different typologies have been proposed to distinguish between the multiple directions within the institutionalist literature (Hall and Taylor 1996, Lowndes 1996, Peters 1999). HI has been defined against rational choice institutionalism (where institutions appear as the rules of the game structuring interaction) and sociological institutionalism (where institutions define norms and identities which determine individual behaviour). HI, it is argued, charts a middle way between these approaches, seeing preference formation as *constrained* but not *determined* by collective institutions whose form and legitimacy are derived from past practices (Aspinwall and Schneider 2000:16; cf. Simon 1957).[21] With regard to institutional change, HI refutes the belief that institutions change in response to changes in their environment. Typically, adaptation and change of inherited wisdom is late, inefficient and characterised by path-dependence and myopia rather than rational reform (March and Olsen 2006a:7,11). The concept of path dependence holds particular importance. The analysis of the QWERTY

keyboard is a paradigmatic example of how certain technological solutions are "locked in" and halt further innovation, illustrating how rationality at the individual level may lead to a suboptimal collective outcome (Arthur 1989). In organisational life, the path dependence argument contends that predominant features – ideational and structural – are locked in from an organisation's initial phase. Development is typically conceptualised as a branching model: once specific choices are made, it is increasingly difficult to return to a previously rejected path (Krasner 1984:225).

A similar view is recognisable in the party literature, where the genetic approach contends that party organisation is constrained by its period of creation, which leaves a lasting imprint on the party (Panebianco 1988:20). Institutional reformers are constrained by "the dead weight of previous institutional choices" (Thelen 2003:493). Pierson accounts for a number of feedback mechanisms which ensure that organisations remain biased against change: learning, coordination and mutual adaptation are three such mechanisms (Pierson 2000a:253-56).[22] Radical reform may not only be *difficult* but *unattractive*, particularly where powerful vested interests are involved (Pierson 2000b:492). Research focus from this perspective is often directed towards short spells of innovation which work as punctuations or critical junctures between long periods of stability. Change is thus seen to occur during abrupt periods where the organisation (for external or internal reasons) is particularly receptive to reform (Hall and Taylor 1996:942, Mahoney 2000:515).

4.2.2. The causal impact of ideas

HI has been portrayed as better suited to explain stability than change, as path dependence suggests an inescapable stability, highlighting short flashes of innovation followed by long periods of reproduction and consolidation (Peters 1999:68). However, as political institutions are under continuous debate, it is not only in brief moments that their structures are challenged (Gains et al. 2005:29). Often, the key processes of change occur as gradual transformation: incremental process with transformational results. Analysing change thus implies the attempt to establish what aspects of an institution are (re)negotiable under which circumstances (Thelen 2003:233). In the case of political parties, the empirical focus would thus be what parts of their organisational and ideational structures are open for change as a consequence of state reform. Change is continuous, and agency is not constrained to particular windows of opportunity (Streeck and Thelen 2005:19).

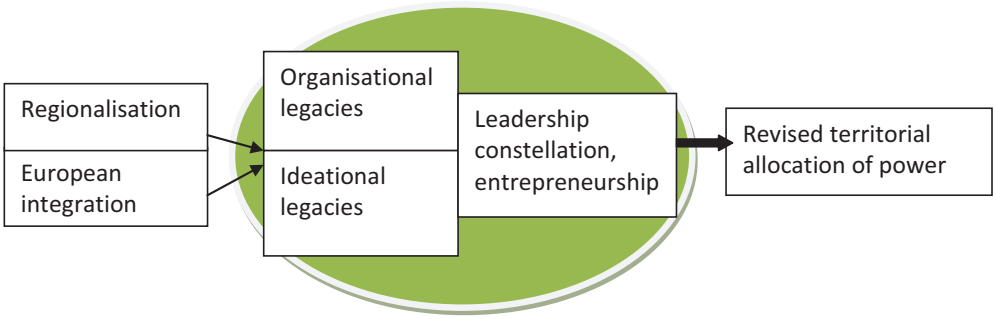
Furthermore, organisational change implies shifting the balance of power not only with regard to actors and strategies but also *ideas* (Hay and Wincott 1998:955-56). HI has indeed seen a turn towards ideas in later years (Blyth 1997, Lieberman 2002, Hay 2004).[23] Berman (1998) exemplifies how ideas could be given a separate role in the analysis of political parties. Analysing the contrasting paths of social democracy in inter-war Germany and Sweden, Berman shows that similar changes in the political environment provoked different responses from each of the two parties, exemplifying how policies that have been locked in at an earlier stage may constrain the scope for later reform. It is broadly agreed that parties carry ideas which are manifest in policy programmes and manifestos and can thereby be analysed. The fact that ideas may devise the *organisational* structure of the party is an observation that is less often analysed. Fruitful examples are found in analyses of the

renewal of Labour in Britain in the long decade from the mid-1980s, which entailed both organisational, programmatic and policy reform (Shaw 2003, Russell 2005). Ideas about appropriate allocation of power may be seen to have path-dependent characteristics in the form of ideational legacies; these legacies constrain political choice. Institutional change therefore requires a challenge towards the ideas that institutions rest upon. Organisational structures not only define the allocation of power, they also act as temporary lock-in mechanisms for political ideas. This does not imply that ideational legacies are static and inescapable; rather, their dominance rests upon organisational structures and sustained support from the leadership (Blyth 2002:306-09). Ideas that are embedded in organisational statutes are the most tangible; useful examples are the allocation of seats in the national executive of a party as well as control over indicators such as party finances, candidate selection and electoral manifestos.[24] In sum, what is proposed by the revised historical institutionalist perspective that I put forward is an enhanced focus on *agency*, a more *dynamic* perception of institutional change and a clearer acknowledgement of *ideas* as causal factors.[25]

4.3. Independent and mediating variables

In part two of this chapter I proposed how the territorial allocation of power in a party could be operationalised. This is also a prerequisite for analysing change: we need to know what precisely must differ in order for us to say that a party has changed its territorial allocation of power. In addition, there is the need to define the independent variables of regionalisation and European integration and the mediating variables of ideational and organisational legacies. Below I seek to clarify those issues.

Figure 1.2: Dynamic of reform in the multi-level party



Of the two independent variables in this analysis, *regionalisation* is operationalised as decentralising reform of the state through the creation of subnational legislatures. Distinction between more or less profound decentralisation could be drawn on the basis of various criteria. The extent of legislative powers is one such criterion: alternatively, decentralisation could be measured as degree of fiscal autonomy (share of public revenue and expenses that is subsequently controlled by the regional level) (Swenden 2006). In the present dissertation this issue is resolved pragmatically: the British case displays distinctly different degrees of decentralisation to Scotland (with primary legislative powers and limited tax-varying powers) and Wales (secondary legislative and no tax-varying powers). If we perceive the scale of subnational legislative powers as indicator of decentralisation, there is a clear-cut asymmetry between powers granted to Scotland and to Wales.

While the creation and consolidation of subnational legislatures is a defining characteristic of regionalisation, there is no such clear-cut basis for *European integration*. In the Europeanisation literature, European integration conventionally works as an independent variable expressing the expansion of EU policy competencies (Knill 2001, Featherstone and Radaelli 2003). What aspects of the EU are the most relevant will vary with

the field of investigation. With regard to political parties, it is particularly the strengthening of party politics in the EP which should be relevant to explaining organisational change. As a consequence of the increasing salience of policy making in the EP, one could expect the organised relationship between the EP party group and the statewide party to change over time, e.g. by MEPs being formally acknowledged in the party executive or being granted enhanced impact on electoral manifestos. Hence, the organisational effects could be easily measurable, but European integration as an independent variable refers to a process rather than explicit institutional creation or reform.

It is perfectly conceivable that there are forces in the party working against territorial reorganisation. An obvious example would be a heavily centralised party ideologically opposed to subnational autonomy and/or European integration. Where such opposition is carried primarily by the current leadership, it is captured by the mediating variable of *leadership constellation*. Where, by contrast, opposition is historically grounded, this is reflected in the mediating variables of *organisational* and *ideational legacies*. Organisational legacies represent the formal allocation of power between territorial levels in the party, involving indicators such as candidate selection, finances and the formulation of electoral manifestos. Ideational legacies in the present context refer to dominant views inherited in the party with regard to territorial issues. In its basic form, it implies party policy towards regionalisation. As a corollary, ideational legacies capture prevailing views within the party with regard to issues such as territorial vs. functional representation, the perceived significance of a territorial centre of government etc.

4.4. Party change: rival hypotheses

In the previous paragraphs, I have drawn up a revised historical institutionalist perspective on organisational change in political parties. The resulting theoretical model (figure 1.2) summarises the theoretical discussion, and it is also the basic model on which the succeeding empirical studies are based. The rationalist perspective would suggest that parties respond to a changing environment by organisational reform. Swenden and Maddens (2009b:13) certainly argue along these lines when they contend that a statewide party in a multilevel party system will be pressed to reform towards a federal structure in order to protect its electoral position, nationally and in each of the constituent territories. Parties which oppose this development may need even more the kind of subnational political entrepreneurs who can attract support for a party identified with opposition to decentralising reforms. The British case may have some interest in this regard related to how the Conservative Party has aimed to reinvent itself in Scotland and Wales. Where parties are subject to territorial reforms, the rationalist hypothesis would be:

> *H1: In response to decentralising reform of the state, parties will gravitate towards the stratarchical party model to adapt to a set of different electoral contexts.*

While this rationalist prediction is fairly clear-cut, the historical institutionalist hypothesis must be more circumstantial. The view of parties as late and incremental reformers has two key implications: first, environmental stimuli will not necessarily lead to organisational change; secondly, the change that does occur will depend heavily on factors internal to the party (Carter et al. 2007:9). Change will be constrained by ideational and organisational

legacies and "filtered by the established procedures, structures and traditions of the parties themselves" (Hopkin 2009:182). In the British context of little more than a decade of subnational legislatures, alongside a slowly evolving process of European integration, incremental and path dependent party change would be the empirical prediction. However, as a basis for investigation this suggests little more than the belief that history matters and that development is defined by dominant structural forces (Peters 1999:75). A revised historical institutionalist perspective should investigate the nuances of party change, including its scope conditions, driving forces and the barriers against implementation. Specifically, the scope for agency should be clarified. The basis of the hypothesis concerns the *speed* and *form* of organisational change:

> *H2: In response to decentralising reform of the state, parties will change their territorial allocation of power only incrementally.* Moreover, *the change that occurs will be heavily dependent on organisational and ideational legacies.*

We could elaborate further two conditions that from the historical institutionalist perspective could be necessary and sufficient to alter the dynamic hypothesised in H2. More wide-reaching change may occur where

- *there are deep contradictions between these legacies and the party's environment...*
- *...coupled with a leadership willing and able to generate radical reform.*

In the seventh and final part of this chapter I return to these hypotheses on the basis of the analysis of three British parties.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The empirical analysis in this dissertation is structured as a comparative analysis of the three dominant statewide parties in Britain – Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. The political system approximates a natural experiment with regard to the relationship between decentralising reform and party change: with subnational autonomy for Scotland and Wales established in 1999, it is possible to compare before and after to analyse the effects on statewide party organisations.[26] In terms of geographical variance, moreover, Britain offers interesting empirical data since primary legislative powers are conferred on the Scottish Parliament, while the Welsh Assembly enjoys only secondary legislative powers and England (or English regions) has no legislature and thus no devolved powers at all. Finally, Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats represent differences in organisational form and ideational legacies towards subnational autonomy, thus providing variation on relevant independent variables from the historical institutionalist perspective.

There is also an additional element to the British case which merits particular attention. The UK is one of only five EU member states electing MEPs by region rather than statewide lists, following electoral reform in 1999. Under the present system, Scotland and Wales are constituencies alongside Northern Ireland and nine English regions. Here, regionalisation meets European integration in a manner which is both analytically intriguing and politically contentious. Has subnational autonomy enabled regional party branches to obtain more autonomy from statewide parties in European policy making, e.g. with regard to selection of EP candidates and programmes? Moreover, has European integration had any impact on the assertiveness of regional party branches at home, i.e. within the confines of

the nation state? This invites a consideration of the territorial dynamic between two territorial processes and the challenges to statewide parties that they present.

5.1. Case studies: balancing particular and general

As reflected by the scholarly literature, empirical studies of political parties generally and MLPs in particular are predominantly oriented towards small-N research (Hough and Jeffery 2006, Poguntke et al. 2007, Hopkin 2009, Swenden and Maddens 2009a). The argument for in-depth analysis is valid whether the emphasis is organisational, ideological or electoral. Parties are complex entities, and theoretical concepts should be grounded and contextualised: in this regard the case study has obvious strengths (Gerring 2007a:48-50). When it comes to MLPs, there have been fruitful comparative analyses of parties across different nation states (Fabre 2008, Thorlakson 2009, Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010), while larger statistical studies are few (Mazzoleni 2009). If there is little scope for grand theory on how parties respond to denationalisation, statistical analyses run the risk of tracing simple correlations while leaving the empirical substance untouched.

The scope for testing and improving theory by case studies is a contested topic in political science. Lijphart (1971) and, more recently, Geddes (2003) have emphasised the inherent problem in studying single cases to test or develop theory covering a large population. Eckstein's (1975) call for crucial case studies points out how maximum analytical leverage could be obtained by selecting cases on the basis of location in the relevant population. Thus, a *least likely* approach could provide robust support to a theory as the case is selected from the margins of where the theory should be valid, while *a most likely*

approach could provide a strong argument for rejecting a hypothesis as the case is selected from the centre of the theoretically defined population. However, crucial case studies in the strict sense are difficult to establish. In the analysis of three British parties, no such strategic case selection applies. Instead, the historical institutionalist approach encourages a search for variation in the assumed independent variables – especially ideational and organisational legacies – to examine whether they contribute to different outcomes in the allocation of power. The analysis is conducted in recognition that the key strength of case studies lies in theory development and *revision* rather than testing, in the context of discovery rather than the context of justification (Gerring 2007a:39-40).

Recent methodological debates have stressed the case study's potential for analysing causality by studying variation both within and across cases (George and Bennett 2004, Gerring 2007a). An implicit argument is that the preference for statistical studies, large samples and causal effects should be replaced by a notion of causality based on a focus on mechanisms and process (cf. Gerring 2007b). Hall (2003:387) contends that "parsimony is no longer seen as a key feature of explanation in the political science, and views about what constitutes an acceptable mode of explanation have shifted towards the historical". While this argument may be overstated, there is little doubt that if the aim is to understand temporal processes where causation is expected to be laced with contextual elements (such as in parties with a few general characteristics and a range of idiosyncratic details), in-depth study has much to offer. Complexity furthermore means that attempts at generalisation should distinguish clearly the specific and the general features of a given causal account. George and Bennett's (2004) concept of *contingent generalisation* signals modesty and precision: results derived from a case study should be subject to theoretical and empirical

specification as to the circumstances under which the results are expected to be valid. This captures the essence of small-N research producing cumulative knowledge through close and nuanced study of individual cases (Rueschemeyer 2003).

5.2. The use of interview data

According to Gerring (2007a:33), "there is an elective affinity between the case study format and qualitative, small-N work, even though the latter is not definitionally entailed". The study of three British parties has mainly been conducted by way of semi-structured interviews, with the last article drawing on textual analysis. Rationalism and HI are broad, overarching frameworks that encourage the development of numerous empirical predictions to be tested against a pattern of qualitative data. However, relying upon interview data poses a set of challenges to the way we do empirical research. If – as argued by Burnham et al. (2004:1) – "critical reflection on method [is what] separate[s] the academic study of politics from political journalism", such reflection must be particularly prevalent in relation to interviews.

Three empirical articles based on interview data are included in the dissertation. Interviewees for the project were approached in part as *informants*, in part as *respondents*. Much of the information acquired related to concrete arrangements for communication, interaction and accountability within the party. In addition to the relatively straightforward indicators on the allocation of power and responsibility, there was a normative element which turned the attention to how subnational autonomy was perceived within the party. Were the present structures for interaction considered effective by the different branches of

the party? Were there grievances that had been noted? To what extent had processes towards the present arrangements been inclusive, what type of concerns had been raised, to what extent had there been a learning process underway? In the article covering relationships between AMs and MPs the approach was slightly different. Here, in addition to the basis of formal information, it was a significant ambition to tap into party culture as a dimension affecting these relationships. Evidently, a larger number of representatives would have given a more valid scope for generalisation. However, to study relationships on the ground also entails limitations in time and capacity, and individual findings add significant flesh to the bone of the more extensive data covering the parliamentary groups.

Qualitative interviewing as a method has often been seen as incapable of testing and refining hypotheses. In reality, however, informants are carriers of knowledge and information which can be measured against pre-conceived theoretical expectations: structure is provided by the researcher (Weick 1989, Pawson 1996, Andersen 2006). Evidently, there are difficulties in establishing patterns from interviews, and in handling contradictory information. To name an example, where a party official in London presents a hierarchical relationship to the regional branches as harmonious and broadly recognised, a regional official may give a quite different account. In such cases, triangulation of sources – as far as possible – can help provide a safer platform for inference. Meanwhile, contrasting accounts on issues which concern the normative, expressive dimension of the interviews also provided very useful insights in viewpoints and modes of thinking in different sections of the party. By taking an activist approach to the interviews, testing theoretical expectations while maintaining a comparative approach, qualitative interviews could help generate results that are more reliable and valid. This is not a refutation of the explorative

interview as a method to gauge subjective experience and interpretation. However, in this dissertation it is the semi-structured, broadly hypothesis-testing approach to interviews that is pursued.

The dissertation is in the main constrained to analysing formal, observable features of multi-levelness. However, the fourth article introduces an ideational analysis of devolution in practice, examining how the autonomy of Scottish party branches is reflected in parliamentary debates on higher education policy. Formal indicators of power allocation must be supplemented by a clear account of how these features are interpreted and enacted by the actors involved. As was the case with the interaction between AMs and MPs, a formal analysis of power allocation in the party cannot give an exhaustive analysis. In the Welsh study, the non-formal aspect of the MLP involves (shared or conflicting) understandings of the appropriate division of labour between the two levels in the party. In the analysis of parliamentary debates, the issue under study was a divisive policy field of great symbolic importance for the relationship between the national and the regional level. Here, ideas are brought to bear with particular clarity. How is Scottish distinctiveness argued for and substantiated? How is an alternative direction of policy justified among the parliamentarians, and how should the path towards diverging policy decisions be understood? The fourth article addresses these questions in as accountable a manner as possible.

6. SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

The four empirical articles included in this dissertation cover different aspects of the way three British parties have responded to territorial reform of the state.

The *first article* is published in 2010 in *Publius: the Journal of Federalism* 40, 1: 59-81. It analyses the three statewide parties through a set of indicators concerning the allocation of power between London and the devolved parties: the selection of parliamentary candidates, the formulation of electoral manifestos and the financing of electoral campaigns. Data for the empirical analysis were obtained from interviews with key party officials and consultation of party rules and procedures. Evaluating how the three statewide parties have developed since 1999, the article concludes that Labour has moved incrementally away from centralism towards stratarchy; the Conservative Party has seen more extensive decentralisation since devolution, while the Liberal Democrats have been the least affected of the parties, given their pre-existing federal structure. From a theoretical perspective, the historical institutionalist hypothesis is lent considerable support: parties change incrementally and special preconditions are required for change to be more abrupt and more wide-ranging. However, the study emphasises the need for more nuanced conclusions: in the Conservative Party, for example, low electoral support and a generational shift in key personnel has created propitious conditions for organisational change – in Scotland but also in Wales, where party officials have taken the role as entrepreneurs to generate new organisational arrangements and to enhance both autonomy and influence *vis-à-vis* the statewide party. In Labour, meanwhile, control over the levers of power has only cautiously been decentralised to the Scottish and Welsh party branches. The Liberal Democrats, finally,

exemplify the relative ease by which regionalisation can be handled when party structures as well as ideational legacies devise stratarchy in the form of federalisation.

The *second article* is forthcoming in *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 17, 4 (2011). It considers the relationship between AMs and MPs in Wales. The intention is to integrate two different strands of research, concerning party response to devolution and the (legislative and representative) role of elected representatives. Devolution has established identical electoral constituencies for the two legislatures, and in the majority of constituencies the AM and MP share party affiliation. How does the relationship between the two parliamentarians evolve? To what extent is there a shared infrastructure, and how is communication and campaigning resolved? Moreover, at the level of political parties, what arrangements have been created for communication between the parliamentary groups? The article develops two hypotheses from the institutionalist literature – first, that *the creation of subnational legislatures challenges party cohesiveness* and, secondly, that *how this challenge is met by the parties is guided by their distinct ideational and organisational legacies with regard to devolution*. Empirical data are drawn mainly from 18 semi-structured interviews with AMs and MPs from Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, mainly covering constituencies where the same party holds both the AM and MP. The analysis lends qualified support to the thesis that the Assembly inspires loyalties rivalling statewide party identification. On the second hypothesis, the findings confirm that not only does the infrastructure for collective communication differ between the parties: there are also contrasts with regard to how relations between individual representatives are resolved. The article makes a call for more refined analysis of how ideas about appropriate behaviour are applied to the new arenas created by devolution.

The *third article* is published in 2010 in *West European Politics* 33, 4: 851–69. It looks more closely at the dynamic between devolution on the one hand and European integration on the other. Regional autonomy and European integration represent a double challenge to institutions at the national level, potentially diluting authority both from below and above. The interaction between them further complicates the situation, as when regions forge direct links to EU institutions. While this multi-level dynamic has been widely debated in the literature on regional executives, much less has been said about how statewide parties have adapted to the emerging dynamic between regionalisation and European integration. Britain represents a fruitful case to study, applying regional constituencies (among them Scotland and Wales) which were introduced alongside devolution in 1999. Scottish and Welsh assertiveness may also be encouraged by the presence of regional representations in Brussels and by the co-participation in Council meetings of direct relevance to Scottish or Welsh affairs. Given the context of enhanced autonomy at home, to what extent have regional party branches obtained more autonomy from the statewide parties in European policy making? To a very limited extent, is the conclusion of the empirical analysis, which draws upon a number of interviews with party officials. Devolution has enhanced the potential for autonomy in the relationship with MEPs: however, this has had little practical effect on policy making, where national unity prevails both in the formulation of manifestos and in the running policy development. Divergence along geographical lines is rare in the EP party groups, and Scottish or Welsh issues are raised as part of the shared policies of the statewide party. An instructive parallel can be drawn to the way subnational authorities relate to EU institutions. Here, several comparative studies have concluded that subnational authorities have largely settled in a working mode where interests are pursued through

member-state agendas, rather than pursuing the vision of a Europe of the regions with insufficient political clout.

Finally, the *fourth article* is forthcoming in *Higher Education Policy* 24 (2011). It focuses upon how the parties have made use of the emerging scope for policy divergence within the borders of the nation state. The case selected for study is policy area of tuition fees for higher education. Here, the debate over student tuition fees has, subsequent to intense political debate, yielded sharply different results in England, Scotland and Wales. The issue of tuition fees represents a strong and symbolic defiance of the policy choices in London. The Scottish abolition of fees has been seen as reflecting the distinctive tradition of higher education in Scotland as well as the relatively left-leaning politics compared to Westminster. Accounting for the policy process leading up to the present arrangements in England and Scotland, the article presents a comparative analysis of debates in the two legislatures. While all the three statewide parties have differed internally between arguments promoted in London and Edinburgh, Labour stands out as the party with the highest thematic consistency. The Liberal Democrats, not surprisingly, show the strongest tendency to highlight Scottish distinctiveness as a reason to chart a separate course from London. Finally, and paradoxically, while policies have diverged, the debates in the two legislatures tend towards *convergence* over the decade of devolution, driven by the shared challenges of the higher education sector. The article finishes by reflecting upon some of the problems raised by policy divergence, to party cohesiveness as well as to users and providers of public services.

7. CONCLUSION: THE TERRITORIALISATION OF PARTIES?

The territorial organisation of parties has become an increasingly prominent feature of politics in Europe. Britain provides an instructive case for studying the dynamic within party organisations responding to the regionalisation and European integration. The backdrop of the present dissertation is that the challenge of multi-level politics is set to increase in urgency and complexity in the years to come.

In part four of this introductory chapter I formulated two rival hypotheses concerning the speed and form of party organisational change. According to the rationalist hypothesis, *in response to decentralising reform of the state, parties will gravitate towards the stratarchical party model to adapt to a set of different electoral contexts.* To what extent does this hypothesis stand up to empirical scrutiny of three British parties? If the prediction of stratarchy is interpreted strictly, the findings do not fully satisfy the criteria. Admittedly, in response to devolution – and on the backdrop of enhanced European integration – the British parties *have* changed their internal allocation of power. A movement along the axis from centralisation to stratarchy is discernible, lending credence to the expectation of party realignment with the structure of the state. However, the movement has generally been uneven and cautious, and convergence is far less prevalent than the hypothesis suggests. There are many hurdles along the way to party organisational change, ensuring that convergence among the parties on territorial organisation has remained unfulfilled during the first decade of devolution.

The historical institutionalist hypothesis predicted that *in response to decentralising reform of the state, parties will change their territorial allocation of power only incrementally* and that *the change that occurs will be heavily dependent on organisational and ideational legacies.*

Two conditions deemed to be necessary and sufficient for more extensive reform were added:

- *there are deep contradictions between these legacies and the party's environment...*
- *...coupled with a leadership willing and able to generate radical reform.*

On the expectation that organisational change would be slow and incremental, the empirical analysis supports the notion that change is less straightforward and responsive than what the rationalist hypothesis suggests. The second prediction of the institutionalist hypothesis – that organisational and ideational legacies provide the keys to how the individual party responds – is also lent considerable support. The overarching observation, however, is that the constraints defined by party legacies provide only the basic framework for reform. *Within* this framework, agency and situational features matter considerably. The analysis of three British parties shows that legacies *do* matter, but always in tandem with powerful actors in the party ensuring that they do. Party elites at the national and regional level define how legacies are translated to organisational practice. Where party change is observed, this is in the form of entrepreneurship by actors (such as regional leaders) seeing the need for reform. Deep contradictions between legacy and environment may help open a window of opportunity for change, but then again, if contradictions are *not* deep there will rarely be an obvious need for reform.

Hence, rather than stating the two conditions as necessary and sufficient they could be seen as *facilitating* or *supportive* conditions, increasing the possibility but not determining that comprehensive organisational change towards stratarchy will occur. The institutionalist hypothesis comes out as broadly supported, but in need for further specification – and, when faced with given empirical cases, specification. The following empirical articles aspire to do precisely that. Beyond the search for nuances looms the criticism commonly launched against institutionalists that they are incapable of deriving testable propositions from their theoretical perspective (Lindner and Rittberger 2003). Indeed, institutionalism sometimes appears more in the form of conceptual lenses structuring empirical studies than theory being tested (cf. Allison 1969). The often limited stringency of institutionalist studies is a comments in response to which nuances should be elaborated and more precise hypotheses developed. It is important that this is pursued, as institutionalism has a vital dimension to offer party analysis – a field which has too often neglected Panebianco's (1988:xiii-iv) dictum that "[f]ew aspects of an organization's functioning and current tensions appear comprehensible if not traced to its formative phase".

Britain is a particular object of study with regard to territorial politics. Devolution is asymmetric and only applies to Scottish and Welsh party branches. However, asymmetry is far from unique in the context of territorial politics, where Spain is another prominent example. Moreover, regionalisation does not have to be all-embracing to be of analytical value. A more important concern to raise at the end of this introductory chapter is that there are underlying normative issues in the analyses which could have been subjected to more in-depth debate. Examples of such issues are the following:

- How does internal reallocation of power affect party democracy, with regard to legitimacy as well as membership mobilisation (article 1)?
- To what extent are citizens in Scotland and Wales better served by having an extra layer of parliamentary representatives (article 2)?
- How could regional constituencies and a strengthening of Scottish and Welsh party branches improve the democratic quality of the EP – and, more broadly, the legitimacy of European integration (article 3)?
- What are the consequences of devolution for the regional responsiveness of public policy, and how should diverging preferences in each part of Britain be accommodated by the statewide parties (article 4)?

The scope and ambitions of the empirical articles only permits brief attention to be paid to these issues. If regionalisation and European integration are to meet demands both for effectiveness and democracy, there will be more to debate in political terms – but also from the academic vantage point, along conceptual, causal and normative dimensions of the "territorialised" parties emerging in Europe.

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NOTES

[1] The federal principle also lends itself to non-territorial division of authority: examples could be federal systems where ethnicity, organisational affiliation or any other distinguishing criterion is applied (Watts 1998).

[2] *Subnational* and *regional* are used interchangeably in the dissertation to denote the territorial level of government between the national and the local. The existence of subnational legislatures with some legislative authority is seen as a key definitional criterion of regionalisation. This also enables comparison between regionalisation and European integration, where the European Parliament provides parties with the essential opportunity structures for representation.

[3] Paraphrased from Karl Marx (1897), p. 1. The original phrase reads, in the English translation: *"Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand. The tradition of all past generations weighs like an alp upon the brain of the living."*

[4] *Britain* is used throughout the dissertation to denote Great Britain, i.e. England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland, which has separate legislative arrangements and a separate party system, is not analysed. References to *regions* or *regional* in the British case refer to Scotland and Wales unless otherwise stated: this is for the purpose of consistency and comparability and does not negate their existence as nations.

[5] See 'Multi-level parties in process: Scottish and Welsh MEPs and their home parties', article 3 in the present dissertation.

[6] As for which of the indicators which would be the first to change in the wake of decentralising reform of the state, again the literature provides no clear answer. Candidate selection and manifesto formulation would need to be decided upon immediately, and would therefore offer a useful assessment of the immediate capacity for change in a party. This is a field which merits more empirical investigation, including in the British case on which this dissertation is focused.

[7] A pragmatic way of resolving the issue of how devolution unfolds would be to focus upon the extent to which there is an observable change in output as regional party branches gain control over more of the essential tasks in the party. Pursuing the meaning attached to selected strategies however requires a more interpretive, in-depth approach to assess how regional party branches conceive of their increased autonomy.

[8] Both definitions given by Jennergren (1981), p.39.

[9] Reproduced from 'Multi-level parties in process: Scottish and Welsh MEPs and their home parties', article 3 in the present dissertation.

[10] David B. Truman (1955), p. 123.

[11] William S. Livingston (1952), p. 81.

[12] With regard to the *influence* regional branches exert on the central party, no such correlation with state structure is found (ibid.).

[13] Note also Bache and Jordan's (2006:30) useful definition of Europeanisation as "the reorientation or reshaping of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practices and preferences advanced through the EU system of governance".

[14] This form of elite consolidation and membership detachment is also an essential feature of the *cartel party* as theorised by Katz and Mair (1995).

[15] Interestingly, the European dimension represents a double obstacle to subnational legislatures, which have no direct channel to any of the decision-making institutions. According to Kiiver (2006: 4-5), "[t]he centre-

region and government-parliament gap, when combined, lead to a situation where the involvement of the Scottish parliament in EU matters is mediated, and mitigated, by the Scottish executive, the Westminster parliament, and the UK government".

[16] Moreover, although incumbency could hamper party change towards stratarchy, as has arguably been the case with Labour (cf. Laffin et al. 2007), the consequences of being in government will often be most relevant to the *non-formal* aspect of internal power allocation, through elite agreements on the scope for policy divergence and the extent to which alternative political identities can be nurtured by regional party branches.

[17] Decentralisation was, for example, a touchstone of reform in the French socialist party during François Mitterrand´s presidency; in Britain, the devolution scheme promoted by Labour and introduced in 1997 was a key element in the party´s renewal (Keating 2004).

[18] What is referred to as *the rationalist perspective* in this chapter could also be denoted by other labels. In chapter two, which is the first empirical article of this dissertation, the concept of *actor-centred functionalism* (Pierson 2004) is applied. The basic assumptions are shared, including the view of parties as collective actors choosing strategy to maximize benefit and therefore responding rationally to changes in their environment.

[19] It might be appropriate here to recapture the phrase by the previous Secretary of State for Wales Ron Davies that devolution is a process, not an event (Davies 1999). Harmel (2002:133) also makes the important qualification that a process may of course be triggered or initiated by an event. Regionalisation in the form of devolution, as well as the progressive European integration, fits appropriately with the reference to trends or processes on which functionalism (and the system-level trends approach) rests.

[20] Samuel L. Eldersveld (1964), p. 9.

[21] HI moreover has its own distinguishing features in a strong emphasis on the historical trajectory of institutions, a distinctive role for ideas as causes and a sustained focus on substantially important collective institutions (Thelen and Steinmo 1997:8, Judge 2005:9-10).

[22] Elsewhere, Pierson comments the importance that path dependence is used with analytical care to ensure that the concept is explanatory and not merely descriptive (Pierson 2004:49). Similar concerns are raised by Mahoney (2000:507).

[23] According to Blyth (1997:230), this development has largely reflected a desire for more complete accounts of institutional change rather than introducing ideas ad hoc to explain change that could otherwise not be accounted for.

[24] Less immediately available are the ideas about appropriate allocation of power which underpin these formal arrangements in the party. Focus in the dissertation is directed towards formal arrangements; however, non-formalised ideas about power allocation do constitute a backdrop, particularly in chapter three (analysing inter-parliamentarian arrangements in Wales).

[25] A focus on ideas is furthermore a fruitful approach to the *friction* between ideas and formal structure which may generate political change (Lieberman 2002). An institutional order based on statewide political parties may see its legitimacy challenged by a different logic in which regional party branches operate autonomously, supported by separate legislatures and new political identities. Reform towards Eldersveld's (1964) stratarchical party is a possible outcome of this friction, but as we have seen it is certainly not the only possible outcome.

[26] Formally, a natural experiment requires that other variables driving party change be held constant. This is not claimed in the present analysis.

Institutional resilience meets critical junctures: (re)allocation of power in three British parties post-devolution

ABSTRACT

How do parties react when their institutional environment is federalised or devolved? This article investigates how the three dominant British parties have responded to devolution in terms of internal reallocation of power. Party change is evaluated in the light of a functionalist and an institutionalist perspective. I find that Labour has moved incrementally away from centralism; the Conservative Party has changed more extensively towards stratarchy, while the Liberal Democrats, already federalised pre-devolution, have been the least affected of the parties. Our findings lend some support to the institutionalist thesis that (functionally driven) party change is restrained by distinct organisational legacies. However, critical junctures, typically induced by electoral failure, could facilitate a party's break with organisational legacies to embark on more extensive reform.

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INTRODUCTION

How do national parties respond to federalisation or, in a less extensive form, devolution? British politics provides an interesting case since parties here have been faced with a new strategic environment since the establishment in 1999 of legislatures in Scotland and Wales.[1] Devolution has brought a sub-national level of legislative government to the fore, introducing a dynamic which differs from the centralised structure of the traditional Westminster model (Bache and Flinders 2004:38). Analysing how parties respond to devolution should deepen our knowledge on party organisation in a multi-level polity. With the emergence of a sub-national level of political power, do the parties follow by internal reform?

The question raised in this article is thus *to what extent devolution has been accompanied by similar decentralisation of power in the dominant UK-level parties*. Previous research on British parties under devolution has focused predominantly on Labour (Morgan and Mungham 2000, Hassan 2002, Laffin and Shaw 2007, Laffin et al. 2007a), while comparative analyses have been rare (Bradbury 2006, Hopkin and Bradbury 2006). Moreover, while few analyses of parties under devolution apply distinct theoretical frameworks, even fewer draw on contributions from the federalist literature which could add relevant insights (Deschouwer 2003, Hopkin 2003). The present article tries to amend these shortcomings through an analysis of (territorial) allocation of power in Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. The ambition is twofold: first, to establish a clear picture of where power is allocated in the three parties near a decade after devolution; second, to test the validity of two competing theoretical perspectives concerning party change. While a *functionalist* perspective would see internal decentralisation of power to

Scotland and Wales as an expected effect of devolution, an *institutionalist* perspective would expect change to be incremental and path dependent, with organisational variables mediating (and possibly obstructing) moves towards decentralisation. Parties draw on distinct organisational structures and inherited ideas about appropriate allocation of power, and internal reform will thus be late and incremental in response to environmental change.

The present article evaluates these two perspectives in light of how Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats have responded to devolution. I choose to focus on three indicators of power: the *selection of parliamentary candidates*, the *formulation of electoral manifestos* and the *financing of electoral campaigns*. The rest of the article proceeds as follows: first, a review is given of dominant themes in the literature on parties and devolution, and two theoretical perspectives are presented; second, the empirical analysis evaluates how each of the three parties has responded to devolution; and, finally, the main findings of this analysis are compared and summarised in a conclusion.

STATE STRUCTURE AND ALLOCATION OF POWER IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Parties are essential to the dynamic of a federal or regionalised state. Riker (1964:136) argued that the territorial balance within the parties mirrors the degree of centralism in the federation itself. Notwithstanding the significance of parties, how they are affected by changes in a federal structure has not been as closely analysed in the literature (Brzinski 1999, Heidar 2007). Here, Britain provides a natural laboratory of institutional change. A useful comparison may be post-war West Germany, where the new federation effected a transformation of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) towards a federalised *Länder*-based

organisation (Gabriel 1989:67); another interesting parallel is found in the asymmetric devolution in Spain since the early 1980s, where the Popular Party and the Socialist Party have chosen different rather than converging organisational models (Hopkin 2003:233-34). There is little agreement on how parties respond to devolution and how party response can be accounted for theoretically. In the broader literature on federations, a typological distinction is often drawn between the *cooperative* federalism of the German model, where parties and public policy mutually reinforce national integration, and the *dual* federalism of the United States and Canada, where policy areas as well as parties are clearly separate between the state and federal levels (Mayer 1970, Renzsch 2004). Within both these ideal types, parties and governance structures are seen as mutually constitutive, in the tradition of Riker (1964). Parties, it seems, are part of the federal structure, and within established federations they organise in harmony with the territorial principles of the state itself.

British parties developed within a unitary state of executive dominance and hierarchically organised territorial administration (Lijphart 1999:9-21). Drawing on Riker's view of federalism, one would expect a centralised state to foster similarly centralised parties, which has been largely true of Labour and the Conservative Party though less so of the Liberal Democrats (Ingle 2000). Devolution however presents the British parties with a different environment, where Scotland and Wales are acknowledged as sub-national political entities. The fact that devolution in Britain is asymmetric (with primary legislation only granted to Scotland, and with England being left out of devolution altogether) does not disqualify the use of federal theory on party development. Fundamentally, in a federalised polity, parties should divide power across territorial centres while maintaining an overarching role for the national party. This corresponds to the stratarchy model, an ideal

type derived from federal politics which devises a de-coupling between the mother party and her local and regional offspring (Eldersveld 1964; Carty 2004).

The centralism vs. stratarchy dimension may be seen as a conceptual yardstick along which the three British parties can be analysed (table 2.1). Laffin and Shaw (2007) have applied a similar centralism vs. stratarchy dichotomy to analyse policy making in Labour. The present article moves beyond this focus to consider the internal allocation of power within all the three parties and the extent to which this has shifted since devolution was introduced.

Table 2.1: Centralism vs. stratarchy in political parties

		Centralism	**Stratarchy**
General characteristics	**Organising principle**	Unified party	Party as franchise
	Power allocation	Centralised, unitary	Dispersed, federalised
	Policy towards sub-units	Hierarchical command	Delegated autonomy
Indicators of organisational autonomy	**candidate selection**	Low autonomy	High autonomy
	manifesto formulation	Low autonomy	High autonomy
	financing of electoral campaigns	Low autonomy	High autonomy

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Perceiving the line between centralism and stratarchy as essential, one may formulate two contrasting hypotheses on how British parties have responded to devolution. Stratarchy will be treated here as a functionally driven response to the emergence of multiple electoral arenas. Applying the political party as unit of analysis one may predict that parties adapt their organisation to the electoral market: where political authority is split between several territorial levels, parties will respond by decentralising authority, as "heterogeneity of membership, and the subcoalitional system, make centralised control not only difficult but unwise" (Eldersveld 1964:9). Centralism will also pose a barrier to the party's credibility at the sub-national level: such a party structure will thus be both dysfunctional and illegitimate (van Biezen and Hopkin 2006:16-17). The stratarchical party will allow regional adaptation just as a franchise structure allows individual firms to adapt their product to geographically diverse consumers. The emergence of stratarchical parties could thus be seen to harmonise with what Pierson (2004:105) refers to as actor-centred functionalism. I hypothesise from this perspective that:

- *a parallel transformation and hence convergence around stratarchy has occurred in all the three British parties*. Power, in the sense of tasks and responsibilities, will have been clearly decentralised from London to the Scottish and Welsh parties.

An institutionalist perspective, on the other hand, would contend that internal party reform is mediated by organisational legacy. Changing the view of territoriality requires a new ideational settlement, where sub-national interests are balanced against organisational

unity. Historically, British parties have found different ways of coping with regional diversity. The ideational settlement is institutionalised in the party as the legitimate allocation of territorial power. Party development is subject to path dependence: how power has been allocated at the formative stage points out a trajectory which will be very hard to reform, especially if the legitimating ideas have been institutionalised as essential to the party's identity (Berman 1998:26-27). From an institutionalist perspective, then, decentralisation of party structures will be late and inefficient. The only exception to incrementalism will be if environmental change is sufficiently profound to shake the foundational principles of the party. Such a performance crisis may open a window to deeper internal reform, the result may be a critical juncture where the organisation shifts onto an entirely different path (Pierson 2004:135, March and Olsen 2006:15).

I contend that devolution as such should not be sufficiently transformative to present parties with a critical juncture. Hence, the institutionalist prediction would be that organisational legacies still determine party response to devolution. Such legacies do not imply that parties are incapable of adjustment. Overt centralisation of power in London would for example go against the principle of devolution and would therefore be impossible to maintain. However, what one would expect from an institutionalist perspective is that parties make minimal adjustments, while maintaining their distinct organisational legacies. Thus, there will be no convergence around stratarchy. I hypothesise from an institutionalist perspective that:

- *internal allocation of power in the parties has been subject to only late and incremental reform and remains different between the parties post-devolution*.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Data are drawn from ten semi-structured interviews with central party staff in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff during 2008 (see Appendix). Party rules and regulations were also consulted to obtain concrete information on procedures and allocation of tasks. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of their strategic oversight of relations between London and the Scottish or Welsh parties, for example from the position of (regional) general secretary, chairman or party manager. They were approached as sources of concrete information, but with an additional concern to compare perspectives as to whether devolution has changed power relationships within the party.

Along the centralism vs. stratarchy dimension I identified three indicators: candidate selection, manifesto formulation and financing of electoral campaigns. Changes in *candidate selection* reflect the allocation of power and, more specifically, the degree of centralism within a party (Ranney 1965, Gallagher and Marsh 1988, Katz 2002). Central command here typically implies maintaining a list of approved candidates who can apply to a constituency party when a vacancy is advertised. Such lists are applied by all the three British parties for general elections[2], and a similar arrangement was established for the first devolved elections in 1999. Devolution gave expectations for more decentralised control over the approved lists (Bradbury et al. 2000:52).[3] The *electoral manifesto* is the key policy document produced by a political party, and defining who is responsible for writing and ratifying it is therefore a concise indicator of power (Hopkin 2003:231). Devolution opened the scope for decentralised manifestos for Scottish and Welsh elections, as general elections have only allowed for minor variation from the national manifesto.[4] Finally, the *financing of electoral campaigns* indicates where the resources, and hence the centre of administrative power, are

located in the party (Denver et al. 2003). For each of the three parties I will briefly establish its pre-devolution position on these three indicators before considering the development thereafter, focusing on the three devolved elections held in 1999, 2003 and 2007.

Labour

Among the British parties, Labour historically comes closest to being a traditional mass party, legitimised from below through its claim to representation of a distinct social class (Duverger 1954). Nevertheless, policy-making in the party has typically emerged from compromises between parliamentary and trade union elites (Panebianco 1988:94). The National Executive Committee (NEC) has been the meeting point between the different stakeholders in the party. During the 1990s, Tony Blair's organisational reforms aimed to redress Labour's perceived lack of cohesion and command. As a consequence, the party has moved towards a kind of democratic centralism where individual members are accorded a marginal, advisory role to the leadership while activists and trade unions have seen their influence diminish (Shaw 2002).

Labour has historically taken an ambivalent view of devolution. While enjoying a strong and consistent support for the party in Scotland and Wales, this has not been in the form of a devolved or federalised party (Mitchell 2003:168). Neither the Scottish nor the Welsh party holds *ex officio* representation in the NEC. In Scotland, Labour was known as the Scottish Council of the Labour Party until 1994. Labour in Wales, established as late as 1947, has been explicitly subservient to London (Morgan and Mungham 2000:89-90). Even today, Labour at the devolved level may be seen as regional units of a centralised party (Hopkin and

Bradbury 2006:137). Centralism, finally, has been considered indispensable for a social democratic approach to redistribution and welfare.

During the 1990s, Labour took the lead on devolution through the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff. Devolution was preceded by a general process of centralisation within Labour, as indicated by Blair's organisational reforms.[5] This notwithstanding, a functionalist perspective would point to stratarchy as an expected consequence of devolution with the party adapting to a new institutional framework. From an institutionalist perspective, however, I would expect any move towards stratarchy in Labour to be hampered by the party's historical legacy of centralism, which will mean that centralised organisational structures have been maintained.

Candidate selection

On the selection of Labour candidates in Scotland and Wales, Laffin and Shaw (2007:62) claim to observe an *informal* delegation of power over time. In 1999 the NEC had some influence on the approved list through its presence in the candidates committee. In Scotland this had the alleged effect that certain candidates deemed too radical were excluded, provoking protests that Scottish Labour was implementing orders from London (Hassan 2002:154). Laffin et al. (2007b:208) however maintain that disputes over candidates equally reflected ideological debates *within* the Scottish and Welsh parties. Since the first devolved elections a balance has been attained where the NEC sets the basic framework while the candidate selection itself is devolved. According to Roy Kennedy, director of finance and compliance in London:

> *Beyond the procedures we let them get on with the business themselves. The national party wants to ensure we have some basic principles on selection so that we have good-quality candidates, and also that we are sure they apply the agreed procedures such as the one-member-one-vote. Once these principles are set we are happy for the regional parties to draw the panels up and the constituency parties to do the selection.*

In Labour as in the two other parties, a distinction is drawn between approved lists for general and devolved elections. Nominees for the general election list are admitted on the basis of interviews by the Scottish/Welsh Executive Committee (acting on behalf of the NEC) and the nominees are then endorsed by London. The list for devolved elections, meanwhile, is under the full discretion of the Scottish and Welsh parties.[6] As for transfers between the lists, devolved candidates in Wales have until recently had to go through an additional interview to be eligible for general elections: this has now been removed. A similar barrier has not existed in Scotland, where the two approved lists are compatible and a transfer will be made on request.

The manner in which Labour has handled candidate selection reflects a careful balance between the centralised and devolved. The selection process in 1999 was challenging for the party, which had the largest number of MPs and a government eager to avoid divergence from established policies in London (Bradbury et al. 2000). This resulted in a few highly publicised cases of conflict between the party at the national and devolved level.[7] Since then, arrangements for candidate selection have been consolidated around a largely stratarchical model, as reflected in 2003 and 2007.

Manifesto formulation

Manifesto formulation in Labour as in the other two parties has been clearly in the hands of the parliamentary elite (Ware 1987:141). Under the present rules, the NEC together with Labour's Parliamentary Committee and representatives from the National Policy Forum (NPF) together decide which elements of the party program are included in the manifesto.[8]

In Wales and Scotland, the devolved parties have been given considerable scope to formulate policy within their areas. Devolved manifestos imitate Labour's procedure at the national level: cutting out the final version is delegated to a group drawn from the parliamentary party and the Scottish/Welsh Executive Committee. Even in Wales, where the local Labour elite has often been portrayed as a torch-bearer of the party in London, manifestos for devolved elections are now defined in Cardiff, in line with the stratarchy model. Manifestos for general elections, however, remain the responsibility of the NEC. Historically, only slight variations have been admitted (such as the bilingual version for Wales). Today, producing manifestos eligible across Britain is a delicate task. In Scotland and Wales, devolved policy areas are not affected by a general election, except for the indirect effect of spending in England. The solution has been to (re)state in the manifesto the policies of Welsh and Scottish Labour, even if the general election will have no effect on devolved matters. Coordinating these issues is particularly difficult in Wales due to the complex division of competencies.

Labour's approach to manifesto formulation has seen a clear movement towards stratarchy. Remaining challenges, as we have seen, largely concern how to fit devolved issues into general election campaigns. This is a challenge which is common to all three parties but particularly prevalent in Labour as the governing party at both levels.

Financing of electoral campaigns

Labour is a centralised party in financial and administrative terms. Despite devolution, the party has maintained a relatively rigid control of resources at the centre and a direct employment relationship between London and Scottish and Welsh party staff. The general secretaries may be seen as "territorial managers operating on behalf of the centre" (Laffin et al. 2007a:102). There is a long tradition in Labour for concentrating funds at the centre, to be (re)distributed on the basis of careful assessment. All individual membership fees are processed by the head office in London. The relevant constituency party then receives one-third of the fee, the remainder is controlled by the head office for redistribution. In years with electoral campaigns funding is of critical importance to the central-devolved relations. According to Roy Kennedy, director of finance and compliance in London:

> *We would not give Cardiff and Edinburgh block grants. Even for devolved elections, we would have some control over what is going on. We would give some money for their work in the office, but we would also look at things like phoning target seats from our national call centre, or we would decide to pay for selected activities in the constituency parties.*

On the surface, this procedure applies equally for devolved and general elections. At a more general level, however, the balance between central and devolved funding has changed over time. In Scotland, Labour has moved from having its staff fully financed from London to seeing about one third of it paid by Scottish Labour. Furthermore, close to two-thirds of Scottish Labour's expenses for the 2007 campaign were covered from Scotland, in sharp

contrast with the first devolved election in 1999.[9] In Wales the impression is similar. While key personnel and office space are paid by London, most other costs are carried by Welsh Labour. The capacity for fundraising at the devolved level has increased.

While financial relations involve a potential for conflict, this tension should not be overstated. According to Chris Roberts, general secretary in Wales:

> *The agenda would be more "we don't have enough money" than "what does this mean for the future relations between the central Labour Party and Welsh Labour". It tends not to be as rational as that. The issue is: how much money can we raise to accomplish what we want?*

Thus, Labour formally remains a centralised party in financial terms, but Welsh and Scottish Labour have strengthened their role over time, representing a cautious movement from centralism towards stratarchy in the financing of campaigns. Caution and incremental decentralisation is indeed the general findings with regard to Labour, which goes largely in support of the institutionalist perspective on party change.

The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party, in contrast to Labour, has historically shown little pretence of running a democratically driven organisation (Webb 1994:110). The party emerged as a loosely organised parliamentary group before the advent of mass franchise. Formally, the Conservatives were until the late 1990s constituted by three separate organisations: the parliamentary party, supremely headed by the leader, the party's Central Office, and the

party on the ground, as the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations. Unlike Labour, the annual party conference has never been regarded as more than a rally of the faithful, although it may informally have been more influential. Reforms designed by party leader William Hague in 1997-98 brought the three pillars of the party together in a single structure and created the executive National Board alongside a Conservative Policy Forum. Party members were now also to play a role in selecting their leader and had their power over candidate selection confirmed. The reforms coupled democratisation with an underlying centralisation of power (Judge 2005:85-88, Kelly 2004).

The Conservative relationship to devolution has been difficult, as the only party to campaign against devolution in 1997. Historically, the Conservatives have more than any other party been associated with Unionism. Formally detached as the Scottish Unionist Party until 1965, the Conservatives in Scotland could present a distinct profile and draw upon Protestant and Unionist support (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006:138): in Wales, less autonomy has traditionally been granted. During the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, both the Scottish and the Welsh Conservatives were subject to centralisation which reversed the limited degree of stratarchy within the party. Since a 1998 reform, however, the Scottish Conservatives are now again a constitutionally sovereign party (Lynch 2003:169-70). In Wales, organisational autonomy has been less extensive as the Welsh party remains subordinate to the Conservative Party in London. However, a separate Board has been established, and like his/her Scottish counterpart, the Welsh chairman has been given *ex officio* representation in the Board of the British Conservatives.

On the whole, the Conservative Party historically scores high on centralism but less consistently so than Labour. A functionalist perspective would predict a consistent move

towards stratarchy in response to devolution, underlined by the Conservative capacity for pragmatic adaptation and reform (Ball 2005). An institutionalist perspective would on the other hand predict that hierarchical rule from London remains embedded in the party, particularly towards Wales and that devolution has only led to incremental decentralisation within the party.

Candidate selection

As in Labour, in order to be elected through the Conservative Party a prospective candidate must be admitted to either the general election list or the list for one of the two devolved legislatures. Here, the party has made a significant move towards stratarchy: the Scottish and Welsh Conservatives both have boards responsible for admitting candidates to the devolved lists, which are under their full discretion. For general elections things are different, as London holds the power to sanction candidates approved to the lists. Nevertheless, much has been invested in developing a Scottish and Welsh profile also for general elections. According to Andrea Stephenson, operations coordinator in Scotland:

> *I think Scotland has suffered in the past from the perception of interference from London. By having our own list we are certainly trying hard not to be seen as just putting up people from England who are interested in improving their own experience. We want people who have strong connections to Scotland, who want to fight for a Scottish seat.*

As we have seen, the Scottish Conservatives have a separate organisational history which they have been able to return to and build upon since devolution. In Wales the context is different, as the party has a legacy of close identification with London. One strategy to leave behind this legacy has been to recruit candidates that are considered Welsh, but under a common Conservative brand. Selection procedures reflect a party that is more comfortable than before with Welsh autonomy as part of the larger party family. According to Lyndon Jones, chairman of the Welsh Conservative Party:

> *Following the establishment of the Welsh Assembly, we set up a board of assessors who were given the job of establishing a list of candidates who wanted to stand for the Welsh Assembly. This board is totally governed from here. Its members are also used to assess applicants who want to stand for Westminster or European elections, and are used in Wales and England, because they are trained to the same standard and apply the same criteria for all elections.*

Candidate selection in the Conservative Party has by tradition been quite decentralised to the constituency level. However, with devolution the significance of the Scottish/Welsh parties has been clearly enhanced. The electoral misery in Scotland and Wales has been one of the driving forces behind this development. Between the central and the devolved level there has been a clear-cut move towards stratarchy, modified only by the sanctioning power of London over admissions to the general election lists.

Manifesto formulation

The influence of the party leader on manifestos has traditionally been very strong in the Conservative Party, although modern manifestos typically involve a broader range of policy expertise. The research department at the Conservative Central Office has seen its role reduced while different thematic committees headed by shadow ministers now do much of the groundwork, with the final content then determined by the Board in London (Ingle 2000:60). At devolved elections, manifestos are to a very large extent grounded in the party in Scotland and Wales. According to the chairman of the Welsh Conservative Party, Lyndon Jones:

> *In all the devolved areas Welsh Conservatives decide what our positions on those issues are. In short our policies in the devolved areas are "Made in Wales". Indeed, our policies are sometimes different from England in many areas, but that is how devolution works.*

Discussion with London occurs mainly to avoid outright schisms between policies laid down in the manifestos. The following comment from Robert Kaye, special adviser in London, suggests how this balancing act occurs:

> *In devolved elections, the Scottish and Welsh parties are in charge. The policies formulated there are not going to be implemented UK-wide anyway. We let them go on with their matters as long as we are not essentially contradicting each other. We*

> *are not trying to impose the same policies across the UK... But there is an informal convention not to be difficult but rather help each other out at the different elections.*

The fear that the regional parties might be "essentially contradicting each other" illustrates how stratarchy is not really put to the test before the party has shouldered governmental responsibility at either the national or the sub-national level. Enhanced autonomy to the Welsh Conservative party has thus proved to be electorally rewarding but remains untested in terms of substance and hard policy choices. In Scotland, the authorship of the manifesto lies with the parliamentary leader of the party who leads the manifesto group. During the process the group will consult with London, but there is no formal power of sanction by Central Office. In Wales, it is the devolved party's policy director, a Welsh Assembly Member (AM) who is responsible for the manifesto. The documents are finally ratified by the party Boards in Edinburgh and Cardiff. In the general election manifesto, Edinburgh and Cardiff are allowed their own sub-sets of devolved policies. Here, the shadow ministers for Scotland/Wales will play a considerably larger role, and the content is communicated with the Conservative party leader, who is ultimately responsible for the manifesto at general elections. All in all, the formulation of electoral manifestos has been extensively decentralised, an arrangement which, responding to electoral market and the desire for a Welsh and Scottish party brand, fits neatly with the development captured by the stratarchy thesis.

Financing of electoral campaigns

In terms of finances, the Conservative Party has historically granted more sub-national autonomy than Labour. In Scotland, the party has been independent in financial terms from London (Kellas 1975:111-12). Over the last fifteen years, streamlining of campaign techniques has led to a generally enhanced control from the centre: also, at general elections, strategic management from the Conservative central office has grown in importance (Denver et al. 2003:546). Management from London is however far less prevalent at devolved elections which are our main focus here.

In Scotland, the devolved party is self-financed, except for the funding of parliamentary by-elections where London gives financial assistance. Scottish membership fees are retained in Edinburgh. To the Welsh Conservatives the issue is more complicated: the party has to a large extent been funded from London and these arrangements are only slowly beginning to change. Funds are still mainly received in Cardiff in the form of block grants from the party head office. The individual constituency parties are mainly responsible for their own campaign funding. However, in both Scotland and Wales some constituencies receive special treatment from London. Targeted seat are given special support at general elections, and this activity largely by-passes Edinburgh and Cardiff. As long as the two sides agree, however, this causes little controversy. According to Andrea Stephenson, coordinator in Scotland:

> *The fact that we are a separate party doesn't mean we don't talk to them, it doesn't mean we don't share best practices. Moreover, strategic priorities are normally quite straightforward. We first of all have to find the best solutions for the party.*

The picture that emerges of devolved electoral campaigns is one of full financial autonomy in Scotland and somewhat less autonomy in Wales. In both cases, however, the individual constituency parties shoulder a large part of the financial burden. Finally, to the extent that London has a more direct impact in Cardiff than in Edinburgh, campaign financing again reflects a kind of asymmetrical stratarchy. Extensive moves have been made in the Conservative Party away from centralism. In this regard, the party's development supports the stratarchy thesis to a larger extent than Labour. However, the moves have been partial and only in Wales have clear ruptures occurred from the party's organisational and ideational legacies.

The Liberal Democrats

Like the Conservatives, the Liberal Party emerged from a parliamentary group well before universal suffrage: yet, in organisational design the two parties followed different paths. The Liberals developed a largely decentralised party organisation: at the same time, MPs were autonomous from their constituency parties and decoupled from the organisation on the ground (Panebianco 1988:89). This created a hybrid party: essentially elitist in its parliamentary politics while at the same time distinctly decentralised and geared towards membership influence (Whiteley et al. 2006). During the twentieth century, the grass-roots dimension of Liberal politics attained the strongest impact. Moreover, the federal structure of the party (akin to its proposed policy for the government of Britain) prepared the ground for a stratarchical approach to the party.

Localism and federalism remained the guidelines for the Liberal Democrats which resulted from the merger with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1988. The constitutional

separateness of English, Welsh and Scottish Liberal Democrats has been maintained, with the federal party a unifying structure above. In light of the general perception of centralised British parties, the party thus stands out as an exception, which has been further enhanced by the centralisation of Labour and the Conservative Party from the 1960s onwards. Significantly, a federalised party structure also meant that, among the three dominant parties, the Liberal Democrats were the best prepared for devolution - even if a symmetric federation of England, Scotland and Wales was what the party had initially opted for (Bogdanor 2001:128). Thus, while a functionalist perspective would predict an easy realisation of stratarchy in response to devolution, institutionalism would make a similar prediction on the basis of the party's federalist legacy.

Candidate selection

The selection of parliamentary candidates has from the start been a completely devolved issue for the Liberal Democrats, and only nuances can be added to this picture since devolution. In Scotland and Wales, selecting candidates for both Parliament in Westminster and the legislatures in Edinburgh and Cardiff is under the discretion of the state parties. This creates a system where it will be more or less the same procedure whether you are selecting a prospective Welsh MP or AM, but the Welsh procedures differ from the Scottish procedures which again differ from the English procedures. The federal party is thus blocked from interference over candidate selection. The remaining potential for contention concerns transfers between the various approved lists. There is a committee meeting biannually to bring together the selection boards of England, Wales and Scotland. One of the problems they have to consider is that acceptance for the list in England does not equal being

accepted for the Scottish list, where they have a two-tier approval (similar to the Conservative Party) reserving particularly qualified candidates, or in Wales, where they have a grading system.

With devolution, a further differentiation of candidates between England, Scotland and Wales appears to have emerged. The approved lists for general elections are coordinated, so that a prospective candidate admitted in England will be eligible also for a Scottish or Welsh seat. For devolved elections, however, a policy conversion is required: while in Wales, this is a mere formality, in Scotland the process involved is more demanding. According to Stephen Peters, chair of campaigns and candidates in Scotland:

> *We need to know the candidate and that they have been through our training. If someone is approved down south, they will still have to go through some sort of assessment here. You should be aware of the logic created by devolution; we have to ensure that candidates are cognisant of the policy areas that have been devolved to the Scottish Parliament.*

The fact that candidate selection procedures differ slightly between the state parties is considered a natural property of a federalised party. Still, there is some anxiety in London that different standards of approval apply. On candidate selection, the Liberal Democrats thus reflect some of the virtues but also challenges raised by a stratarchical approach.

Manifesto formulation

Centralism may be a question of capacity as well as desired allocation of power. To the Liberal Democrats, the sheer lack of resources in Scotland and Wales previously raised a barrier to policy development, to the extent that party relations could be seen as just as centralised as those of Labour (Laffin et al. 2007b:215). Policy capacity is however one area where much has changed in the party over the last few years and where devolution clearly has had an impact. While the Liberal Democrats in Scotland and Wales have comparatively small party offices, parliamentary support staff have added tremendously to the party's policy-making capacity. According to Ben Stoneham, headquarters director in London:

> *Scotland for example is so much more able to do its own policy making, it has research people in Parliament who can do all the background research that we never had before. That is a huge improvement in our resource and capacity.*

Electoral manifestos are subject to a more formalised process than the running policy development in the parties. Both the Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats enjoy full autonomy over manifestos for devolved elections. Their Policy Committee is responsible for the document, which must be finally endorsed by party conference. Significantly, manifestos for general elections are drawn up on the basis of what the party believes should be devolved rather than what is formally devolved today. This leaves some scope for confusion: in cases where the Scottish or Welsh party goes too far, the constitution of the Liberal Democrats states quite bluntly that the Federal Policy Committee

> *shall have the right to be consulted upon, and in the case of a conflict (but after consultation with the State Party concerned) to override any proposal to be contained in the General Election manifesto of any State or Regional Party…*[10]

This is however rarely played out in practice. Stephen Peters, chair of campaigns and candidates in Scotland, comments:

> *Central regulation of divergence would go against our idea of a federal party. What we try to do is ensure there is a Liberal thread, that there are principles which we agree on and which will be there. In Scotland we are looking for Scottish solutions to Scottish problems. Also, we are talking about coalition politics which means you can't just go out and deliver your electoral manifesto. After a series of negotiations, the resulting program for government is going to be a compromise...*

Under devolution, the Liberal Democrats have obtained governmental power through coalition arrangements with Labour, in Edinburgh (1999-2007) as well as in Cardiff (2000-03). As reflected in a number of initiatives, a federal party does not necessarily imply policy divergence. On the contrary, the party has communicated closely between Scotland, Wales and London, leading to "nationalization or homogenization, rather than a denationalization or regionalization, of public policy" (Laffin 2007:666). Political practice has thus been remarkably convergent despite the internal autonomy granted by the party's constitution, signifying that formal stratarchy may be coupled with close internal harmonisation.

Financing of electoral campaigns

The Liberal Democrats are the least well resourced of the three dominant parties in Britain, and once again one meets the maxim that it does not matter as much who controls the money as whether there is any. Over the last few decades, campaigning for the Liberal Democrats has been a membership-driven affair. According to Judge (2005:97) "the limited resources of the party's central organisation means that responsibility for constituency campaigns, beyond key target seats, still remains primarily devolved to local constituency parties". The party's headquarters both at the national and devolved level therefore play a very small role in campaigns beyond providing some training and encouragement (Denver et al. 2003:547).

Membership fees in the Liberal Democrats are divided between the state and federal parties. For the principal reason that the Welsh and Scottish parties are smaller, they are helped out financially by the federal party. This is particularly relevant during election campaigns. Such funding often entails some specific requirements as to how the money should be applied. According to Ben Stoneham, headquarters director in London:

> *Inevitably, there is some negotiation. Again, there is an element of devolution, so Scotland has a campaign officer, but our campaign expertise is mainly a federal resource. If we were giving, say, two hundred pounds (sic) to the Scottish party, inevitably we would say we want this money to be spent on target seats, we don't want to see it used on a national advertisement campaign.*

Spending decisions for devolved elections hence take the form of negotiation rather than command. The process is somewhat different for general elections, where funding from London is larger and more direct, according to Stoneham:

> *The negotiation then is much more with individual constituency parties rather than state parties. Of course they can take views from the state parties as to which are the target seats, but then the federal campaigns committee has representatives in Scotland and Wales on it… Normally the federal party will decide with the individual constituency parties how that money is spent.*

All in all, the limited resources of the Scottish and Welsh parties create a financial dependence on the federal party. Furthermore, the fact that funding is accompanied by spending requirements ensures that the Liberal Democrats are not as close to stratarchy on campaign financing as they are on candidate selection and manifestos. The general impression is one of a near-completed stratarchical party, with financial decentralisation the remaining hurdle.

CONCLUSION

In his classic account of parliamentary candidate selection in British parties, Ranney (1965:273) summarised that "Labour has the most formal central control of the three parties and has used it the most; the Conservatives have somewhat less and have used it very little; and the Liberals have little central power or influence". This is not far from how one may conclude with regard to allocation of power in the three parties post-devolution. Such continuities support the institutionalist assumption that structures laid down in the formative period of a party are maintained despite later changes in its environment (Panebianco 1988). Overall, there are clear limitations to how much the parties have changed as a result of devolution.[11] The observation that distinct organisational trajectories may prevail under devolution is supported by research on Spanish parties (van Biezen and Hopkin 2006, Fabre 2008). An interesting parallel can also be drawn to the *supra*-national level, where the emergence of the European Parliament has had negligible effect on national party organisations (Mair 2000, Poguntke et al. 2007). Estimated (current) positions of the three parties on the centralism vs. stratarchy dimension are given in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Indicators of organisational autonomy: positions in 2007

		Labour	**The Conservative Party**	**The Liberal Democrats**
Indicators of organisational autonomy	**candidate selection**	(Largely) stratarchical	(Largely) stratarchical	(Very) stratarchical
	manifesto formulation	(Largely) stratarchical	(Largely) stratarchical	(Very) stratarchical
	financing of electoral campaigns	(Largely) centralised	(Largely) stratarchical in Scotland / (largely) centralised in Wales	(Largely) centralised

At the outset I formulated two competing hypotheses concerning party response to devolution. The stratarchical hypothesis stated that *a parallel transformation and hence convergence around stratarchy has occurred in all the three British parties*, while the institutionalist prediction was that *internal allocation of power in the parties has been subject to only late and incremental reform and remains different between the parties post-devolution*. On the basis of the empirical analysis, I find that the institutionalist hypothesis of stability and incremental change is lent considerable support by data on the British parties. Clearly, the parties have not converged around a stratarchical model. In Labour and the Conservative Party, reform has been slower than the functionalist thesis would predict, and organisational change has followed separate trajectories in each of the parties.

As argued by Pierson (2004:131), actor-centred functionalism may "suggest a world of political institutions that is far more prone to efficiency and continuous refinement […] than the world we actually inhabit". Existing organisational structures typically remain despite functional pressures to reform. Functionalism may not be a bad place to begin if one wishes to hypothesise on the direction of reform over time: parties *do* respond to environmental change, and, in the case of devolution, they *do* turn (if only cautiously) towards more stratarchical arrangements. Change, however, is mediated by organisational legacies which delay reform and maintain the idiosyncratic character of each individual party.

When does organisational legacy have the strongest impact? Comparing Labour and the Conservative Party may be instructive here, as both parties have changed since devolution, but in various forms and to varying degrees. Developments in Labour, with its legacy of centralism, largely correspond with the institutionalist perspective. The party has

moved incrementally towards stratarchy, decentralising candidate selection and the formulation of manifestos while remaining a largely centralised party in financial terms.[12] The Conservative Party, on the other hand, has been through more profound, but also more diverse, change. Traditionally portrayed as stereotypically unionist, the party has responded to devolution by revising its approach to party management – particularly so in Wales, where enhanced autonomy has been introduced on candidate selection and the formulation of manifestos. Furthermore, both the Welsh and Scottish parties are now represented *ex officio* in the national Board of the party.

These observations of Labour and the Conservative Party are theoretically useful. Although it was suggested that devolution has not amounted to a critical juncture to the parties, applying an institutionalist perspective should entail a more nuanced inspection of concrete actors and events. If one party (or a sub-national section of that party) suffers disproportionately as the result of a reform, it can indeed be faced with a sufficient shock to facilitate profound change. Devolution seems to have shaken the foundations of the Conservatives in Wales, introduced as it was against the party's will and coinciding with a historical low in its support. This may have opened a window of opportunity for extensive reform, which when exploited led to a reorganisation of the party; a critical juncture. Labour meanwhile represents a contrasting example where the party both in Scotland and in Wales has avoided a decisive break from its centralised organisational legacy. Does it mean that organisational legacy is considered more important in Labour, particularly with regard to centralism (McKenzie 1963)? An alternative, more event-driven interpretation would be that stability has prevailed in the absence of a performance crisis and with considerably larger risks related to internal reform, as Labour has served in government both in Edinburgh,

Cardiff and London. Electoral strength in Scotland and Wales also means that the central party in London has an interest in maintaining a unified approach and that (a portion of) its Welsh and Scottish MPs agree as they are opposed to seeing their influence and cohesion in Westminster undermined (Morgan and Mungham 2000:112-13).

Devolution could be seen within the broader framework of multi-level governance and the shift away from the Westminster model as organising perspective (Bache and Flinders 2004, 33). British party politics is in a process of transition, with pressures to decentralise towards the sub-national level. As seen in the analysis above, party response to these pressures is non-linear, deeply affected by party legacy as well as situational constraints. An institutionalist perspective can make a valuable contribution to this field through a refined conception of change. For example, while organisational legacies may be overcome, such extensive reform is typically preconditioned by a window of opportunity which may open in the wake of electoral failure. Further research should consider the role of political entrepreneurship in this reform process. Closer study is also needed of the defining features of the stratarchical relationship which may ensue between parties at the national and the devolved level, what Carty (2004:12) refers to as "a franchise contract that defines the essence of a particular party's intra-organisational bargains". Britain provides fertile terrain for studying the effect of federalisation on political parties, a process which is likely to continue in the years to come.

APPENDIX

Interviews conducted for the article

- Lyndon Jones, chairman, Welsh Conservative Party, Cardiff 1 February 2008.
- Robert Kaye, special adviser on devolution, Conservative Party, London 16 January 2008.
- Roy Kennedy, director of finance and compliance, Labour Party, London 15 January 2008.
- Christian Moon, deputy head of policy and research, Liberal Democrats, London 16 January 2008.
- Stephen Peters, chair of campaigns and candidates, Liberal Democrats, Edinburgh 29 January 2008.
- Chris Roberts, general secretary, Welsh Labour, Cardiff 31 January 2008.
- Andrea Stephenson, operations co-ordinator, Scottish Conservative Party, 30 January 2008.
- Ben Stoneham, headquarters director, Liberal Democrats, London 15 January 2008.
- Lesley Quinn, general secretary, Scottish Labour, Glasgow 30 January 2008.
- Ian Walton, party manager, Welsh Liberal Democrats, Cardiff 1 February 2008.

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NOTES

[1] Special arrangements are also created for the Greater London Authority (from 1999) and Northern Ireland, but these will not be dealt with in the present article.

[2] Throughout this article, *general election* refers to elections for Parliament in Westminster.

[3] Devolved elections also introduced regional lists as supplement to the individual constituency candidates. This part of the candidate selection process is not discussed in the present article.

[4] The Liberal Democrats are an exception here, as their general election manifestos have had devolved sections since the party's foundation. It could be argued that only policies with nation-wide or repercussive effects would be susceptible to centralised control. In the present analysis, however, focus is directed towards the general control over manifesto formulation.

[5] With regard to Labour's approach to the Scottish and Welsh parties, there is an interesting parallel to the relationship between Labour in London and its party group in the European Parliament. Here the home party has also been accused of excessive control through its influence over candidate (re)selection (Messmer 2003).

[6] The caveat should be added that formally, any candidate that is accepted anywhere has to receive endorsement from the NEC.

[7] One prominent example is the election of Dennis Canavan as an independent candidate after being rejected from Labour's approved list in Scotland, another is the fall of Alun Michael as party leader and first secretary in Wales in 2000; Michael had been elected one year earlier following strong pressure from the party in London (Laffin et al. 2007a:95-96; Bradbury et al. 2000:58).

[8] Labour Party Rule Book, Clause V.2.

[9] Financing of the 1999 campaign referred to in Laffin et al. (2007a:102). Estimates for 2007 supplied by the General Secretary of Scottish Labour, Lesley Quinn.

[10] The Constitutions of the Liberal Democrats: The Constitution of the Federal Party, Article 7.3.

[11] Hopkin and Bradbury (2006), observing all three parties on *political recruitment*, *electoral campaigns* and *policy making in the devolved institutions*, find similar support for the argument that each of the parties remains close to its organisational past.

[12] Laffin et al. (2007a:102,105) conclude that Labour wavers between centralised and decentralised control on key indicators, of which administration and finance remain the most centralised.

Party legacies and institutional gravity: the dynamic between Members of Parliament and Assembly Members in Wales

ABSTRACT

What does the creation of subnational legislatures entail for the work of parliamentary representatives, and by what guidelines does the cross-level relationship evolve? This article considers the issue in the context of British devolution, relating the analysis of parliamentarians to the question of how parties adapt. The empirical analysis, drawing on a series of interviews with Welsh Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) from Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, shows that the infrastructure for communication between AMs and MPs differs considerably between the parties. Moreover, there are also key differences between parties with regard to how relations between individual representatives are resolved. Drawing upon insights from the institutionalist literature, I argue, first, that the creation of subnational legislatures challenges party cohesiveness and, secondly, that how this challenge is met by the parties is guided by their distinct ideational and organisational legacies with regard to devolution.

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INTRODUCTION

Subnational legislatures are a familiar phenomenon under federalism as well as in the increasing number of regionalised states in Europe. With the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales in operation since 1999, Britain has become a significant member of the latter group.[1] In the research on British parties, devolution has led to enhanced attention towards the consequences for parties of multi-levelness (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Hough and Jeffery 2006, Laffin et al. 2007). A different research avenue has highlighted the interaction between Parliament and the devolved legislatures (Horgan 2004, Hazell 2007). The present article aims to integrate the analysis of elected representatives with the issue of party adaptation to devolution. *What (formal and non-formal) structures have been established by the parties to facilitate cross-level interaction between parliamentarians? Moreover, where differences occur between the parties, how can these be accounted for?*

The analysis singles out Wales for further investigation. In contrast with the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales (the Assembly) does not have primary legislative powers.[2] However, with regard to cross-level interaction between parliamentarians the Welsh case is particularly fruitful: one of the consequences of devolution is that, contrary to in Scotland, Members of Parliament (MPs) share identical constituencies with the 40 (out of 60) Assembly Members (AMs) that are elected from single-member constituencies.[3] The constituency basis of parliamentary representation is a deeply embedded feature of the British system of government (Birch, 1964; Lundberg, 2007). Consequently, the arrival of new representatives was expected to cause tension with

incumbent MPs (Russell and Bradbury 2007:98). More generally, the emergence of subnational legislatures could exert pressure not only on individual representatives but also on the ability of parties to remain cohesive across territorial levels; cohesiveness is here understood as the extent to which organisational and ideological structures are sufficiently unitary for a statewide party to be seen as one organisation with shared political aims across its territory. Statewide parliaments and *ditto* political parties were integral to the creation of a national political space, what Caramani (2004) refers to as the nationalisation of politics. Devolution may suggest a step towards reversal of this pattern. How parties – and, by implication, parliamentarians – respond to this development is thus significant for the polity as a whole.

In scholarly debates on devolution and political parties, the relationship between parliamentarians has only briefly been addressed (Bradbury and Mitchell 2007). This article contributes to the field through a comparative study of the structures of interaction between AMs and Welsh MPs in Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. The next section gives a brief review of research on relations between parliamentarians under devolution. Thereafter, the theoretical framework grounds the study in two institutionalist hypotheses on party reform. Thirdly, the main part of the article presents the empirical analysis based on interview data from a small set of constituencies where AM and MP represent the same party – assessing, first, the *institutional gravity* hypothesis concerning AM/MP relations in general, then the *party legacies* hypothesis concerning structures of interaction in each of the three parties. Fourthly and finally, the results and wider implications are summarised in a conclusion.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATIVES, PARTIES AND DEVOLUTION

Although constitutional supremacy remains vested in Westminster and no autonomy is granted to England, devolution has transformed the British polity towards a quasi-federal state (Bogdanor 2003, Loughlin 2004). Referenda in 1997 prepared the ground for subnational legislatures in Scotland and Wales, the first elections being held in 1999 for a Scottish Parliament (with primary legislative and tax-varying powers, limited to three per cent on income tax) and a National Assembly for Wales (with secondary legislative and no-tax-varying powers).

The asymmetry between Scottish and Welsh devolution creates different sets of relations between parliamentarians. Devolution to Scotland is based on clear-cut division of competencies, enabling a more transparent (though hardly unambiguous) division of labour between MPs and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). Powers devolved to Wales however are limited and less clearly defined. One of the consequences is a porous division of labour between AMs and MPs. At the *parliamentary* level, this has been enhanced by the Government of Wales Act of 2006 which extends the legislative initiative of the Assembly under the precondition of close interaction with Westminster and a pivotal role for the Secretary of State for Wales.[4] At the *constituency* level, the absence of clear jurisdictions between AM and MP (and the conceivable confusion among constituents) means that each is at risk of invading the policy turf of her counterpart. Russell and Bradbury (2007:112-13) find a fusion of responsibilities between AM and MP, with the latter often taking on casework which is formally devolved. Interaction between AMs and MPs in the constituency is thus affected by their overlapping mandates from the Assembly and Parliament.[5]

However, the AM/MP relationship in each individual constituency is also affected by party culture, which appears to have an opaque but significant effect on how individual relations are resolved (Bradbury and Mitchell 2007: 142). Such reference to party culture, tradition and legacies has become commonplace not only in studies of parliamentarians but also in accounts of party organisational reform in response to devolution. An initial expectation in Britain was that statewide parties would converge around the decentralised party model favoured by federalism (Mitchell and Seyd 1999; cf. Chandler and Chandler, 1987). What comparative studies shown however is considerable heterogeneity in parties' allocation of power following regionalisation. Factors such as party family and government incumbency are significant barriers against any uniform decentralisation: moreover, individual party legacies also impact on party reform (Swenden and Maddens 2009, Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010). Studies of British parties under devolution have drawn similar conclusions: parties change in different ways and to different degrees in response to regionalisation (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Fabre 2008, Bratberg 2010). There are thus numerous related findings in the empirical literatures on elected representatives and party organisation. Many of these findings highlight the institutional variables mediating between functional requirements of the (multi-level) environment and the political or organisational response. The present article attempts to flesh out such an institutionalist approach in more explicit terms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Assessing the relationship between AMs and MPs, one hypothesis could be that it depends exclusively on individual and idiosyncratic factors. Here however I will proffer two alternative positions – one derived from organisational theory and one from historical

institutionalism – to address the AM/MP dynamic within each of the three dominant statewide parties. The organisational and the historical institutionalist positions are complementary. Both are grounded in institutionalism, which has inspired a broad range of research over the last two decades but which also has a much longer pedigree in political science (Simon 1947, Selznick 1957). Institutionalist approaches emphasise how (individual and collective) agency is affected by institutions – that is, "the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall and Taylor 1996:938). The institutionalist approach to decision making is also reflected in Allison's (1969) classic study of the Cuba crisis, where the bureaucratic politics paradigm states that "where you stand depends on where you sit": actors operate according to different role conceptions and loyalties embedded in the organisational structure (Allison 1969:707,711).

From the institutionalist perspective, devolution has enabled subnational legislatures as distinct arenas for recruitment, socialisation and the promotion of territorial interest (Morgan and Mungham 2000). The Assembly creates a set of organisational loyalties (supported also by parliamentary posts and salaries) which supplement the party affiliation of AMs and MPs. Loyalties towards the Assembly are expected to centre upon the promotion of Welsh interests within the UK settlement and the strengthening of the Assembly's political strength in relation to London and Westminster. This development could cause tension within the statewide party, something which should then be reflected in the way parliamentarians from the two levels interact. What I will term the *institutional gravity* hypothesis states that:

- *devolution has inspired loyalties to subnational institutions that rival the statewide party identification, causing intra-party tension between AMs and MPs.*

However, the legislature is only one of the two primary structures in which AMs and MPs integrated. Parties constitute the other organisational affiliation of fundamental importance. Two affiliations are thus brought to the fore – party and legislature – each of which affects the role orientation and thus the policy focus of the individual representative.

How do parties adapt to this development towards a new, and potentially competing, source of identification? *Historical* institutionalism would emphasise that organisational and ideational legacies continue to affect decision making long after they were created (Judge 2005: 10-11). Organisational structures affect the way problems are dealt with and adequate responses developed; moreover, organisational "memory" ensures that responses to pending challenges are developed from what historical practice has laid down as appropriate in the party. Following this logic, dominant legacies within the party will also guide the way it responds to environmental change by (re)allocating power and responsibilities. Extensive reform occurs primarily when an external shock opens a window of opportunity for rethinking fundamental principles of the organisation (Egeberg 2003:120). Elsewhere, stability prevails: path dependence suggests that once a set of operating procedures and guiding principles has been established, self-reinforcing processes make it increasingly difficult to return to the branching point where a specific policy or organisational structure was adopted (Pierson 2000, Thelen 2003). Policy decisions in a formative phase of political parties are significant examples of such path-making events (Panebianco 1988:163). Indeed, one may argue that parties should be particularly prone to path dependence in policies as

well as organisational structures: parties' internal and external justification is built upon the legacies they maintain.[6]

Thus, a historical institutionalist approach to party change would suggest that change is late and incremental, and that when it occurs it will be guided by ideational and organisational structures laid down in the past. With regard to devolution, how the territorial dimension has been accommodated in the party structures at an earlier stage (for example, the degree to which parties have been hierarchically structured around London) provides the basis for adapting to devolution. Not only do these legacies impact on collective structures in the party: they are also expected to affect the role orientation of parliamentarians and their cross-level structures of interaction. The *party legacies* hypothesis states that:

- *adaptation to the devolved settlement – as reflected in the extent and form of coordination between AMs and MPs – differs systematically between the parties in line with distinct party legacies.*

The present empirical study only comprises the three dominant statewide parties in Britain; Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. Omitting Plaid Cymru from the analysis requires an explanation: in the present analysis, it is primarily the territorial dynamic in statewide parties operating across the UK that is the focus of research. This is however not to disregard that the cross-level dynamic of parliamentarians both from the Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties is relevant: indeed, such a study would be a useful addendum to the investigation in this article.

How, then, do the three statewide parties differ in their historical approaches to devolution? Wales has historically been a region of one-party dominance, by the Liberal Party from the latter half of the nineteenth century then by Labour since the early 1920s (Bogdanor 2001:145); although Labour was reduced at the 2010 general election, the party retains 26 of the 40 Welsh MPs. Traditionally, Conservatives, Liberals and Labour represent different approaches to devolution. While the Conservative Party throughout its history has been a unionist party opposed to the emergence of devolved legislatures, the Liberal Party – and its successor, the Liberal Democrats – has been in the opposite position of promoting a federal Britain. Labour has been located somewhere between the two poles, balancing a commitment to centralised redistribution and welfare with electoral strength in the periphery and particular concern for Scotland and Wales.

Labour's ambiguous stand on devolution to Wales is deeply rooted in the party´s historical position there. Labour expropriated the Liberals' role as defender of the geographical periphery, but the party always highlighted class over geography as identity marker (Bogdanor 2001:150-51). The party thus developed an ambiguous relationship to Wales, as champion of the emerging working class but with a distant – and at times discouraging – view of Welsh language and tradition. The party's class politics governed from the centre was projected on industrial Wales, where social deprivation and industrial strife in the inter-war decades demonstrated the need for state regulation. This perception was further consolidated with the post-war expansion of the welfare state (Morgan and Mungham 2000:71). However, with the cautious resurgence of Scottish and Welsh nationalism in the 1970s, Labour hurried in a manifesto commitment in 1974 to create legislatures in Edinburgh and Cardiff. When referenda were held on the issue in 1979, they

failed marginally in Scotland and overwhelmingly in Wales: Labour was split on devolution, with Neil Kinnock one of the leading "No" campaigners in Wales. During the Thatcher years, Labour continued to play the leading role in devolution debates, its general election manifesto in 1992 proposing a regional tier for London, a parliament for Scotland, and an assembly for Wales (Deacon and Sandry 2007:9). The Welsh Labour Executive was determined to keep the debate inside the party rather than opting for a cross-party convention as in Scotland. Discussions displayed some acrimony, with a cleavage emerging between devolutionists and sceptics who were numerous among Welsh Labour MPs (Morgan and Mungham 2000:112-13). By the time the proposals for an Assembly were finalised, tension over the devolution settlement had cooled off although candidate selection would later generate some unrest within the Welsh party branch (Laffin et al. 2007). As a party organisation, Labour has since devolution continued to emphasise unity across levels while cautiously permitting more leeway for its party branches both in Scotland and Wales. *I hypothesise that parliamentary cross-level interaction in Labour will be infrequent and formal: individual AM/MP relations will vary between proximity and remoteness, reflecting the ambiguous legacy of devolution in the party.*

The Conservative Party campaigned consistently against devolution in 1979 as well as 1997. Since then, it has changed its profile towards a decentralised unionist position which is also reflected in the party structures (Lynch 2003, Bradbury 2006). At a special conference in 1998, the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party reformed itself to gain enhanced autonomy over finances, candidates and policy formulation. For the Welsh Conservatives, change was less fundamental: although the party branch would now have a separate leadership and party board, it was more dependent on London in financial and policy terms

(Ingle, 2000:69). Calls are heard within the party for devolution to proceed with tax-varying powers in Scotland and a law-making parliament in Wales, yet the party in London "remains deeply sceptical of advancing devolution" (Deacon and Sandry 2007:9). Again, the Conservatives in Wales are the most clearly affected by the maintained power of the leadership in London, reflecting a perception of Welsh subordination (Evans 2002). On this basis, *I hypothesise that parliamentary cross-level interaction in the Conservative Party will be limited and formal, reflecting the remoteness and hierarchy which will also prevail between individual AMs and MPs*.

The Liberal Democrats are the party which has been most deeply and consistently committed to devolution, even if a full-fledged federal settlement has been its stated aim. Succeeded by Labour as the predominant Welsh party in the wake of the First World War, the Welsh Liberal Democrats thereafter disappeared into the wilderness, only to slowly resurrect over the last three decades. Operating as a state party within the federal party structure, the Welsh Liberal Democrats are autonomous in policy formulation and administration. Yet, they lean heavily on the federal party in London with regard to financial resources, policy development and campaigns. The Liberal Democrats backed the devolution proposals behind the 1979 and 1997 referenda, but would prefer a law-making and tax-raising Welsh Parliament alongside regional assemblies in England. These would be overseen by a federal parliament in London (Deacon and Sandry 2007:9-10). *Among the Liberal Democrats I hypothesise that parliamentary cross-level interaction will be frequent and informal, implying regular exchanges between the Westminster and Assembly groups and close and non-hierarchical relations between individual AMs and MPs*.

METHODS AND DATA

The empirical analysis draws upon data from eighteen semi-structured interviews with AMs and MPs from Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats conducted between January and May 2008. For each of the three parties, three constituencies were initially chosen in which the party holds both the AM and MP. The two representatives in each constituency were interviewed either in person or by telephone. Regrettably, it proved impossible to obtain consent from all the selected AMs and MPs, especially from the Conservative side: while the Liberal Democrats representatives in all three constituencies were interviewed, only two Labour pairs and one Conservative pair were complete. These interviews were supplemented by similar talks with other AMs and MPs, where a small selection was made to reflect variation in constituency type (urban/rural), the representatives' gender, tenure and size of majority (see Appendix). The interviews were conducted to acquire concrete information on working procedures and allocation of tasks between the two parliamentarians as well as personal assessments of the relationship at constituency level and the collective relationship between the parliamentary groups. Interview data thus concerned the representative's priorities between different tasks of representation, concrete information on the AM/MP infrastructure in the constituency, views on their relationship as well as the collective inter-parliamentary arrangements in the party.

The empirical analysis proceeds in two parts. The first part discusses the relationship between AMs and MPs, whereby the institutional gravity hypothesis is assessed. In the second part I address the party legacies hypothesis concerning differences between the parties. To what extent have different structures of interaction between parliamentarians

been established in response to devolution – and to what extent can party legacies help explain the form and strength of these arrangements?

INSTITUTIONAL GRAVITY: THE AM/MP RELATIONSHIP IN WELSH CONSTITUENCIES

In the three devolved elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007, Labour maintained its hold on a majority of the 40 single-member constituencies in Wales. The main difference from general elections was a lower number of seats for Labour and a relatively higher number for Plaid Cymru. Electoral research confirms that voters prioritise differently at devolved elections, where Plaid is seen as more relevant and attractive by voters who otherwise support one of the statewide parties at general elections (Wyn Jones and Scully 2006). Following the 2005 general election and the 2007 Assembly election, Labour had 24 constituency AMs and 29 Welsh MPs; the Conservative Party five and three respectively; the Liberal Democrats three and four; while Plaid Cymru had seven constituency AMs and three MPs.[7] Throughout the decade of devolution, the majority of Welsh constituencies have been represented by the same party in both legislatures: as of 2009, there were 32 constituencies of this type.[8]

Compared with split constituencies, sharing a constituency with a party colleague should normally provide for a sound working relationship, something which is supported by earlier research (Bradbury 2007:152). However, co-representation does present challenges even if the AM and MP share party and political outlook. According to Jenny Willott, Liberal Democrat MP:

> *You have to be careful you're not treading on each other's toes... You have to always make sure you are considering the other representative, making sure she is up to date, that you are not responding to something she has already responded to or contradicting her… There are lots of things you need to be thinking about that you wouldn't need to consider if you were one person in the seat.*

Here, I will consider general observations with regard to the AM/MP interaction, assessing the hypothesis that devolution has inspired loyalties to subnational institutions that rival the statewide party identification, causing intra-party tension between AMs and MPs. Three indicators on the strength of the AM/MP relationship were investigated. In all joint constituencies I checked whether the two representatives shared a constituency office and other forms of infrastructure. The interviews focussed on whether there was a systematic difference in policy focus between the AM and MP and whether there was a perceived difference of prestige. Finally, the channels of recruitment for the two legislatures as a whole were examined. I will briefly go through these points in turn.

In 15 of the 32 constituencies where the AM and MP were from the same party as of 2009, they also shared a constituency office.[9] This arrangement sometimes involves overlapping staff responsibilities, and it may also imply joint surgeries. Several interviewees pointed to the practical advantages of co-location, such as tight coordination and easy access for constituents who often do not know whether they should address the AM or the MP. Where representatives have chosen separate offices it often reflects a wish to act autonomously, although in a handful of rural constituencies the separation of offices is determined by geography. Where infrastructure is shared, this facilitates continuous

exchange of casework between the AM and the MP. It also permits closer communication on policy initiatives and electoral strategy. Campaigning in Wales is difficult, with both AMs and MPs formally restricted to a limited number of policy areas and having to balance the sometimes differing priorities of Cardiff and London. Some of the closest AM/MP partnerships in terms of infrastructure also display the clearest partnership in electoral strategy. Consider the following quote from an AM:

> *We take the view that it is all about us winning a political seat. If we were to start getting fuzzy about who deals with what, out there in the public's eye… We feel it is much better to present a unified scenario: we are your politicians to represent you. This joint approach is sometimes more important than the legal distinction of our roles. What we do is to say as we come to an election we will turn up the heat for the one of us who will thus get the bigger profile.*

In terms of priorities and tasks, is there a systematic difference in outlook and focus between AMs and MPs? This is an important question which combines actual tasks with the perception of representative role. Life in the Assembly or Parliament offers different institutional environments. Clearly, where you are located also affects representatives' approach to constituency and Welsh issues. According to one AM:

> *I think Welsh MPs have a similar disadvantage to Scottish MPs. You will be heading for London on Monday morning and returning to your constituency on Thursday evening. Quite a few AMs, however, are in a distinct advantage as we go home to our*

> *constituency every evening. It means we can focus more heavily on constituency work, being able to attend meetings, hold surgeries – and often during the week and not only on Friday which is the constituency day. There is a distinct advantage in that.*

It is a clear impression from the interviews that AMs have a different function vis-à-vis the constituency due to their stronger presence there. However, while AMs may see more of their voters, it does not entail that they conduct fundamentally different tasks from the MPs. Many interviewees emphasised that representative roles and the tasks they entail are often similar for all representatives, although the AM may conduct them more frequently. Responding to queries, holding surgeries and maintaining a public profile are essential parts of this work.

With a devolved legislature, a shared party affiliation is challenged by parliamentarians' identification with separate legislatures and separate policy processes. Brand (1992:247) identified how Scottish MPs were socialised into an arena where territorial interests rapidly disappeared behind the UK-wide political agenda. In the Welsh case, while MPs may maintain a self-perception as guardians of their constituency as well as Welsh interests, they are integrated in UK-wide party groups. Moreover, Welsh MPs conduct their daily work in policy areas offering limited opportunity to promote home interests: some may work in devolved areas such as health and education where policy will apply primarily to England. Here, it appears that a geographical cleavage between London and Cardiff is nurtured by separate politics in the two legislatures. Jenny Willott, Liberal Democrat MP, suggests that work in Parliament inspires a Westminster outlook:

> *MPs specialise anyway because there are so many issues that unless you specialise you are not going to achieve anything anywhere. So you have to focus, and whatever you choose is always going to be of limited interest to your constituents. I work on justice issues: well, not everyone has been to prison, has a relative in prison, not everyone has been a victim of crime...*

Political representation in Wales is ambiguous in relation to status and authority in the constituency. Geographically, AMs duplicate MPs, but in terms of remuneration MPs are considerably better rewarded, a fact that has already been subject to extensive debate (NAW 2009).[10] The issue of hierarchy is relevant all the way from the leadership (concerning the role of the (Shadow) Secretary of State vs. the leader of the Welsh party) to the individual representatives. In the interviews, I dealt with *perception* rather than formality: concerning the different mandate of AMs and MPs, is there a perceived difference in prestige between them? Due to its historical and symbolic significance, Parliament has an obvious privileged status in the British polity. This is reflected in its relationship with the Assembly, which, according to interviewees, trickles down to the individual representatives. The following statement by a Labour AM is representative of the majority of AMs interviewed:

> *MPs are very much seen as the senior figures, and I think that will remain the case for a very long time. The relative responsibilities are different, and the MPs have the full law-making capabilities whereas the Assembly until 2006 dealt mainly with secondary legislation. Many of the big policy areas like defence, foreign affairs, benefits,*

> *taxation, the Home Office are still with Westminster. And on top of that we are the new kids on the block.*

At the individual level, this sense of hierarchy is perhaps the most visible where the MP was in Parliament well before devolution was introduced. This is a typical constellation in Labour: in 18 of the party's 24 shared constituencies in 2008, the MP had longer parliamentary tenure than the AM. Within the two other parties, only one Liberal Democrat MP was in Parliament prior to devolution, and none of the Conservative MPs. Interestingly, however, interviews with Conservatives and Liberal Democrats revealed a significant deference to London, which suggests that this is a general trait among AMs.

To the extent that different role orientations are generated in the two legislatures, they may be enhanced by limited recruitment between them. Prior to devolution it was suggested that Britain would imitate other European nations such as Germany and Spain, where regional tenure has been a veritable springboard for political careers at the national level (Mitchell and Seyd 1999:94). One could also expect the subnational legislature to be a final destination after serving at the national level. Interestingly, neither upward nor downward transfer has occurred to any large degree. With regard to moving up, only three of the 40 Welsh MPs elected in 2005 had a past as AMs.[11] In the opposite direction, by 2008 only three AMs had experience from Westminster, all three holding privileged positions in the Assembly.[12] Data on how many representatives had actually stood for election showed that only six MPs had run unsuccessfully for the Assembly, while four of the 2007-11 AMs had been unsuccessful candidates for Westminster.[13] All in all, the limited exchange between the legislatures signals that neither a stepping-stone perception of moving from

the Assembly to Parliament nor the returning home perception of moving from Parliament to the Assembly cast much light on the career patterns of Welsh politicians.

Interview data support the notion of the Assembly as an alternative career track, officially promoting a different set of values (coalition politics, inclusiveness) and a different political focus (localism and domestic Welsh issues). On this basis, a distinction could be drawn between the specific Welsh scope of the Assembly and the UK-wide policy focus of Welsh MPs. According to Morgan and Mungham (2000:199), "[t]he Assembly signals a wholly new political arena, with its own rules, its own codes and its own networks of trust and reciprocity: it is not, in other words, Westminster writ small". Taken together, the observations of infrastructure, policy focus, prestige and recruitment together lend qualified support to the hypothesis that devolution has inspired loyalties to subnational institutions rivalling the statewide party identification, creating intra-party tension between AMs and MPs.

The significance of parliamentary committees is not much analysed above as the focus is primarily towards constituency structures of interaction. In Westminster, the Welsh Affairs Committee (WASC) is responsible for scrutinising all government policy in Wales still governed from London (Deacon and Sandry 2007:114). Moreover, the committee also plays an essential role under the post-2006 arrangements in scrutinising legislative requests from the Assembly in the form of Legislative Competence Orders.[14] Indeed, a convincing argument could be that the WASC pulls against any perception of gravity. However, despite its strengthened role in the Westminster machinery, the extent to which committee work aids intra-party cohesiveness is an open question. The WASC only comprises around a fourth of the Welsh MPs, and Welsh interests are less pervasive on the agenda of other select

committees as well as on the floor of the House.[15] The much broader Welsh Grand Committee encompasses all Welsh MPs and may discuss freely on Welsh issues, but meets only intermittently and has become less used under devolution (Hazell 2007:254-55).

PARTY LEGACIES: GUIDANCE FOR THE AM/MP RELATIONSHIP

The analysis in the previous sections suggests that the rise of a subnational legislature fosters the development of a separate class of politicians centred in the Assembly. To what extent do parties mediate this development? The historical institutionalist hypothesis assumed that the relationship between AMs and MPs differs between the parties, as a reflection of distinct party legacies. This section accounts for each of the three parties in this light, looking first at the relationship between the parliamentary groups and then at the constituency level.

Labour[16]

In Labour, the high number of AMs and MPs would suggest a solid institutional framework for interaction. Indeed, the Welsh part of the Parliamentary Labour Party is large in number and has, historically, yielded considerable influence and significant contributors to the party leadership. The existing infrastructure between the parliamentary groups is however rather limited: the most explicit platform is a contact group between the two parliamentary groups which, according to the rules, is supposed to meet once a year.[17] None of the interviewees described the forum as essential to the running affairs in each of the parliamentary groups

although, principally, liaison between Cardiff and London is considered important. Often, the task is seen as pertaining to the party structures rather than parliamentary groups: a general observation from Labour AMs and MPs is that relations are relevant primarily between individual representatives and secondly within the framework of Welsh Labour (cf. Horgan 2004). The limited inter-parliamentary contact in the party is illustrated further by the fact that councillors in local government have been relatively isolated from both AMs and MPs.[18]

In the brief account of Labour's historical view of devolution given above, much emphasis was placed on ambiguity – with regard to devolution of power to the Assembly as well as internal autonomy for Welsh Labour. This was the basis of the prediction that a diversity of different and partly contradictory views would characterise AM/MP relations in the party. To a large extent this prediction was supported by the interviews. In constituencies where both representatives are new, things look different from cases where the MP has a long tenure pre-devolution. According to Ann Clwyd MP:

> *I have been the MP for my constituency for over 24 years. People still come to me in large numbers with various problems. Sometimes these are problems that ought to be dealt with by the Councillors or the AM. It is difficult to turn a constituent away, although I do try to channel them to the appropriate elected member.*

Varying degrees of seniority clearly affects how relations evolve. So many of Labour's Welsh MPs have long experience in Westminster that it might be their seniority rather than party legacy that best explains the stronger sense of hierarchy and detachment. From a more general perspective, however, interviewees lend some support to the view that Welsh

Labour MPs have limited contact with their counterparts in the Assembly. AMs and MPs in Labour share a legacy where Welsh Labour was a regional section of the statewide Labour Party. Shaking off this legacy has been a drawn-out affair, marking a considerable contrast to Scotland where a separate policy and organisational platform was established prior to devolution (Lynch and Birrell 2004). As of 2008, ten of the party's 29 Welsh MPs had passed more than 15 years in Westminster. A generational change may well be required to change the existing pattern of AM/MP relations, much in line with what a historical institutionalist emphasis on inherited structures and "stickiness" would suggest. Meanwhile, a power-seeking incentive ensures that there is awareness of the mutual dependence of party work at different levels. According to one Labour AM:

> *The Labour Party seems to prosper as a whole, so any of its composing parts affects the others. The Assembly, Westminster as well as local government – we always need to consider the effect of our decisions on the party's electoral prospects. I think there is a strong understanding that we all sink or swim together.*

The Conservative Party[19]

The Conservative Party, with its small and recently established group in Westminster, draws mainly on (quite extensive) non-formal relations to coordinate policy between Parliament and the Assembly. The party has established Welsh telephone conferences on a weekly basis involving the shadow secretary for Wales, the party's House of Lords spokesman on Wales as well as the MPs, AMs and the party's Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Wales. There is however little in the sense of roundtable discussions and meetings between AMs

and MPs, something which was lamented by several interviewees. The impression of an ongoing learning process is apparent in the Conservative Party, which has changed extensively its profile in Wales over the decade of devolution (Evans 2002, Kelly 2003). In the words of one AM:

> *Until three years ago we didn't have any MPs at all. Thus essentially, the Assembly group was working very much in isolation. But we do rely on our MPs in the House of Commons, as a lot of what involves us is obviously discussed there, including conferring more powers to the Assembly. We need to follow up what our MPs are doing. So a greater deal of coordination is required, a greater deal of effort on both sides.*

The history of the Conservative Party in Wales reflects a clear command from London and a very limited organisational autonomy. With power in the party centralised in London, electability for Westminster has been in focus at the local level without any clear intermediate layer in Cardiff. On this basis, I hypothesised mutual detachment between the parliamentary groups and clear hierarchy also at the individual level between AMs and MPs. While the first prediction of detachment is lent some support by the data, interviews show that individual relations between AMs and MPs are more diverse than initially perceived. According to Stephen Crabb MP:

> *We are starting from a different base. In Labour they will have MPs who have been in Westminster for forty years... In the Conservative Party I don't think there is a feeling*

> *of superiority, but there is a feeling of competitiveness. There are certain issues that are clear, for example health and education are devolved, but there are other areas that are grey, where the responsibility falls somewhere between Westminster and the Assembly. I think there is a potential for competitiveness between certain MPs and AMs as to which of the groups should be taking the lead on these issues.*

This sense of competition may be related partly to individual ambition and partly to genuine uncertainty on the division of tasks. In the process of embracing a Welsh identity the territorial issue may become visible in the party, but, contrary to what one might expect, I did not find clear evidence of any conflict between the AMs and MPs. Two of the party's three MPs in 2008 have a past as AMs, and personal relations are strong. One would however assume that if the prospect of a larger Conservative group in Westminster materialises, clearer guidelines on inter-parliamentary liaison will be needed.

The Liberal Democrats[20]

The Liberal Democrats, on the whole, have developed more elaborate structures for coordination between parliamentary groups: likewise, representatives here appear to be the most satisfied with the arrangements in hand. AMs and MPs collectively provide for a weekly telephone conference where information on agendas and policy issues is exchanged. Inter-parliamentary coordination is a well-known phenomenon in the Liberal Democrats, as party elites have used these non-formal links rather than party discipline to maintain cohesiveness between policy initiatives in each of the subnational legislatures and Westminster (Laffin 2007:651). The significance of informal contacts, between policy spokespersons,

backbenchers and staff, was emphasised by several interviewees. According to Jenny Randerson, AM for Cardiff Central:

> *We are more or less in continuous contact. There are copies of press releases circulated. Our staff correspond regularly. There are also formal away days twice a year where we meet MSPs and MPs, such as in Westminster last month. We would look at the bills passing through Parliament and how these affect Wales. It is very close liaison. The away day is formalised. And then there's of course the informal part that happens on a day-to-day basis.*

Formally, there is no official status in the party for the AM/MP relationship, which has developed on an operational basis. This also means that the linkage depends on personal commitment, which may vary over time. According to one Liberal Democrat MP, "as two corporate groups, the AMs and MPs do not have a very close, or very intimate, relationship". The inter-parliamentary structures of the Liberal Democrats are however more elaborate than those developed by its two rival parties.

With reference to the historical backdrop of the party, I hypothesised that AM/MP relations in the Liberal Democrats would be close and egalitarian and that a joint front would prevail at both Assembly and general elections. Significantly, what was revealed in the interviews was a far from equal status of AMs and MP. The other part of the prediction, however, of proximity and teamwork is largely supported by the interview data. Such cooperation is ensured through the institutionalised meeting points referred to above.

Furthermore, the Liberal legacy is reflected in an often explicit emphasis on localism, which makes the party begin in the opposite end compared to Labour and the Conservative Party:

> *I think as Liberal Democrat it is very easy to emphasise the constituency guardian role. That is because it is embedded in a fundamental philosophy that is rooted in localism and emphasises our belief in the individual. So logically, it flows from that, that you are a servant of your constituency. Casework is a very important part of this role.*[21]

Likewise, the federal structure of the party has guided the party's response to devolution in both an organisational and normative sense. Just like subnational legislatures are building blocks in a federal state, separate parliamentary groups should be inherent to a federal party. According to Mick Bates AM:

> *The fact that we have weekly link-ups with our colleagues in Westminster – where we discuss the legislative processes in both assemblies, and how we will react to them – is a very, very important part. And one that you would expect from a party that believes so much in federalism.*

Nevertheless, as noted above, the notion of the MP's superiority has considerable power among the Liberal Democrats. This is an observation which holds truth across the three parties, lending credence to the notion of Westminster's supreme role in British political life (Judge 1993). Among the interviewees, there was a near-universal agreement on the

superior status of MPs, a view which appears to be as strongly entrenched among the Liberal Democrats as in Labour.

CONCLUSION

What does the creation of subnational legislatures entail for the work of parliamentary representatives, and by what guidelines does the cross-level relationship evolve? This article has analysed relations between AMs and MPs in Wales, focussing on links between representatives who share both party and constituency affiliation but operate in separate legislatures. Devolution in Wales has contributed to a separate career track centred on the Assembly. Interestingly, there has been little mutual recruitment between the Assembly and Parliament, reflecting that the former is neither a springboard to Westminster nor an end station for Welsh MPs. The perception that the Assembly reflects a different set of political values from Westminster has been stated both as a political ambition and as a scholarly observation and was supported by the interviews conducted for this article. There is thus a general tendency that devolution has inspired loyalties rivalling the statewide party, in line with what I referred to as the institutional gravity hypothesis.

How parties respond to this challenge can be seen, *inter alia*, in the form and intensity of cross-level parliamentary interaction. I found that the infrastructure for communication between AMs and MPs differs considerably between the parties. Between the parliamentary groups, the relationship is more formalised and eagerly pursued by the Liberal Democrats, less developed and more cumbersome in Labour, and informal and flexible (though somewhat lacking in substance) in the Conservative Party. These contrasts reflect the respective party legacies with regard to devolution (the egalitarian approach of

the Liberal Democrats, the latent centralisation of Labour, the hierarchy and pragmatism of the Conservative Party). A more controversial observation is that party legacies also guide the way relations between *individual* representatives are resolved. Admittedly, constituency AM/MP relations are affected by circumstances such as ideology, age and experience, and generational shift among Welsh MPs enhances the leeway for developing new sets of relations. There is thus considerable scope for personality in how the AM/MP dynamic unfolds in individual cases. However, party legacies do add significant explanatory leverage with regard to the strength and form of the AM/MP relationship.

Accounting for party legacies implies to go *beyond* party family in order to elucidate how particular features of the individual party's history come to have causal power on organisational structure and policies today (Hopkin 2009). The idea that collective norms and party legacies influence the preferences and behaviour of individual representatives is a long-held, though often underspecified assumption in party literature (Judge 1993; see also Drucker 1979). Likewise, the argument that "external" legislatures generate separate loyalties is familiar from the literature on the European Parliament (Scully 2005). The *mechanisms* by which this influence occurs, such as socialisation and peer pressure, have not been approached in this article but clearly merit further study.

The two main hypotheses assessed here also invite further elaboration and assessment. One could speculate, for example, that the institutional gravity hypothesis is more influential where the subnational legislature has a broader remit and a clearer separation of powers from the national level: within Britain, the Scottish Parliament would be a suitable case. With regard to the party legacies hypothesis, the empirical analysis indicates that legacies matter more where the territorial division of power has been more

fundamental to the party's constituent ideas. In Britain, the Liberal Democrats stands out as the paradigmatic example: a party preaching federalism and embodying the same ideas through political practice. Parties play a significant role in shaping the multi-level polity which arises in Britain. Understanding the ways by which they adapt to the creation of legislatures below (and above) the national level merits enhanced attention in the years to come.

APPENDIX

Interviews conducted for the article

- Lorraine Barrett, Labour AM for Cardiff South and Penarth, email 24 April 2008.
- Mick Bates, Liberal Democrat AM for Montgomeryshire, telephone 10 April 2008.
- Christine Chapman, Labour AM for Cynon Valley, telephone 9 May 2008.
- Ann Clwyd, Labour MP for Cynon Valley, London 1 April 2008.
- Stephen Crabb, Conservative MP for Preseli Pembrokeshire, telephone 9 April 2008.
- Jeff Cuthbert, Labour AM for Caerphilly, telephone 28 April 2008.
- Wayne David, Labour MP for Caerphilly, telephone 24 June 2008.
- Paul Davies, Conservative AM for Preseli Pembrokeshire, telephone 8 February 2008.
- John Griffiths, Labour AM for Newport East, telephone 29 April 2008.
- Carwyn Jones, Labour AM for Bridgend, telephone 14 May 2008.
- Jonathan Morgan, Conservative AM for Cardiff North, telephone 19 May 2008.
- Lembit Öpik, Liberal Democrat MP for Montgomeryshire, telephone 27 March 2008.
- Jenny Randerson, Liberal Democrat AM for Cardiff Central, Cardiff 1 February 2008.
- Chris Roberts, Welsh Labour general secretary, Cardiff 31 January 2008.
- Kirsty Williams, Liberal Democrat AM for Brecon and Radnorshire, telephone 29 April 2008.
- Mark Williams, Liberal Democrat MP for Ceredigion, telephone 6 May 2008.
- Roger Williams, Liberal Democrat MP for Brecon and Radnorshire, London 1 April 2008.
- Jenny Willott, Liberal Democrat MP for Cardiff Central, London 2 April 2008.

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NOTES

[1] Devolved legislatures within the UK also include the Northern Ireland Assembly: due to its particular characteristics in structure and composition however it is outside the scope of the present article and will not be further analysed here.

[2] On 9 February 2010 the Assembly voted unanimously (under section of the Government of Wales Act 2006) to call for a referendum in Wales on extended legislative powers. Following the general election on 6 May, the incoming Prime Minister, David Cameron, stated to the House of Commons that a referendum should be scheduled for 2011. See 'David Cameron says Welsh Assembly referendum in 2011', BBC online 25 May 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/wales_politics/10155091.stm, accessed on 10 June 2010.

[3] The additional member system applied for Assembly elections combines forty AMs from single-member constituencies with twenty list AMs. In Scotland, identical constituencies for Westminster and the Scottish Parliament were applied from 1999 until 2005, when the number of seats for Westminster was reduced from 72 to 59 prior to the general election.

[4] The Government of Wales Act 1998 created the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) as one corporate body. The Assembly opted for a de facto separation between the NAW and its executive, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). The separation was codified in the Government of Wales Act 2006, which also provided for a limited delegation of law-making powers from Westminster. Under the new arrangements, the Houses of Parliament may grant the Assembly powers to legislate on a case-by-case basis in twenty defined policy areas, following a request from the WAG, Assembly Committees or individual AMs (WASC 2010a). These procedures will be simplified if the Assembly powers are extended as a result of the expected referendum in 2011 (cf. endnote 2).

[5] Cf. Patzelt (2007), who finds cross-parliamentary interaction in Germany reflects the cooperative form of the federal system.

[6] See also Harmel and Janda (1994) for an explanation of stability based upon the incentives of party elites.

[7] Additionally, there was one independent representative in both legislatures.

[8] Excluding constituencies which due to border changes were not identical at the two elections.

[9] Data collected through the respective Assembly offices of all AMs in April-June 2008.

[10] As of 2010, the official pay for AMs is £53,852, while the MP equivalent is £64,766. In addition, allowances apply for travelling, accommodation and office costs. Numbers quoted from official figures at http://www.assemblywales.org/gen-ld8055 and http://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/pay-mps/, accessed on 10 May 2010. In 2009, an independent panel proposed, among a number of recommendations, that the automatic link between MP and AM salaries should be broken and an independent review body be created to set the salary levels for each four-year Assembly term (NAW 2009)

[11] The three MPs in question were David Jones, Conservative MP for Clwyd West, a regional AM in 2002-03; David Davies, Conservative MP for Monmouth, AM for Monmouth in 1999-2007; and Alun Michael, Labour MP for Cardiff South and Penarth, a regional AM and First Minister in the WAG in 1999-2000.

[12] The three were Rhodri Morgan (Labour AM for Cardiff West, party leader and First Minister in the WAG in 2000-09), MP from 1987 to 2001; Dafydd Elis-Thomas (Plaid Cymru AM for Dwyfor Meirionnydd and presiding officer of the Assembly since its inception in 1999), MP from 1942 to 1992 and since then a life peer in the House of Lords; and Ieuan Wyn Jones (Plaid Cymru AM for Ynys Mon and party leader), MP from 1987 to 2001.

[13] Data based on official biographies at the Assembly and Westminster websites consulted in September 2008. Among the four AMs who had run for Parliament, three were Conservatives, which may reveal a maintained perception in that party of the Assembly as a stepping-stone.

[14] In addition to this legislative procedure, introduced by the Government of Wales Acts 2006 (cf. endnote 4), some legislative requests from the WAG bypass the WASC in being submitted directly to Whitehall for inclusion in UK bills (WASC 2010b; cf. Hazell 2007).

[15] In the 2005-10 Parliament, the WASC consisted of eleven MPs, ten of whom represented Welsh constituencies.

[16] Interview data on Labour cover AMs and MPs from Bridgend, Caerphilly and Cynon Valley, as well as additional interviews with the AMs for Newport East and Cardiff South and Penarth.

[17] Chris Roberts, general secretary of Welsh Labour, interview 31 January 2008.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Interview data on the Conservative Party cover Preseli Pembrokeshire (South-West Wales) and Cardiff North. Only in the former have both the AM and MP been interviewed, whereas Cardiff North is covered by the AM. All other relevant representatives in Wales declined being interviewed.

[20] Interview data on the Liberal Democrats cover Brecon and Radnorshire, Cardiff Central and Montgomeryshire, in all three constituencies both the AM and MP have been interviewed. The party's fourth Welsh MP, representing Ceredigion, was also interviewed for the article.

[21] Jenny Randerson AM, interview 1 February 2008.

Multi-level parties in process: Scottish and Welsh MEPs and their home parties

ABSTRACT

Regional autonomy and European integration present national institutions with a double challenge, potentially diluting national authority both from below and above. The interaction between the two processes adds a particular dynamic, as when regions forge direct links to the EU bypassing the nation state. The present article looks at three British parties from this perspective, focusing on the autonomy of party branches in Scotland and Wales in relation to their Members of the European Parliament. The empirical analysis confirms that devolution has enhanced the potential for regional autonomy in the parties. However, this has had little practical effect on European policy making, where national unity prevails. The limited effect of devolution can be explained, first, by the hegemonic status of national party unity and, secondly, by the disadvantages of operating alone in the European Parliament. An interesting parallel can be drawn to the way subnational authorities relate to EU institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Regional autonomy and European integration present national institutions with a double challenge, potentially diluting their authority both from below and above. Britain is an instructive example. Here, the political power of London has been constrained by regionalisation in the form of devolution to the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales since 1999.[1] In the same period, policies emanating from the European Union (EU) have continued to permeate both national and regional politics (Bache 2008). Devolution implies a new set of opportunity structures at the regional level, changing the terrain in which political parties operate. The research question discussed in this article is *whether devolution has also enabled regional party branches to obtain more autonomy from the statewide parties in European policy making*. Such autonomy should be visible in enhanced discretion over the selection of candidates and programmes as well as in the forging of direct links to the EU level. British parties are particularly relevant in this regard since Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) since 1999 have been elected on a regional basis, using Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and nine English regions as constituencies. The United Kingdom (UK) is one of only five EU member states using regional rather than statewide lists for European Parliament (EP) elections: regional representation has been opposed by other member states with a strong territorial dimension, such as Spain (Corbett et al. 2007:19).

In the party literature, regional autonomy and federalisation have largely been analysed from a domestic perspective, focusing on party strategies and allocation of power between the national and regional level (Chandler and Chandler 1987, Hrbek 2004). Meanwhile, a separate research agenda considers party reform in response to European

integration (Mair 2000, 2006, Raunio 2002, Poguntke et al. 2007). Uniting the two empirical processes, one below and one above the nation state, could help conceptualise parties in states which are *both* more regionalised *and* more closely integrated than before. As this development is visible in a number of other EU member states, most conspicuously Belgium and Spain, it also opens a scope for comparative research (Brzinski 1999, Giordano and Roller 2002).

The present article discusses the concept of the multi-level party and investigates it empirically on the basis of Scottish and Welsh representation in the EP. Devolution implies a recognition of Scotland and Wales as political entities. Subnational authorities are allowed to co-represent the British government when relevant issue areas are debated in the Council. Moreover, the Scottish and Welsh executives have also forged their own links with the European Commission (Heggie 2006, Moore 2008). The research question is a corollary of this general observation of regional empowerment. To what extent does the emerging acknowledgement of regional interests at the EU level also apply to British political parties?

What will be called the *stratarchical party* hypothesis suggests that with devolution, authority over key decisions will be delegated to regional party branches and that direct lines of accountability will emerge between these and their MEPs. The *unitary party* hypothesis, on the other hand, suggests that party unity prevails when approaching the EP and that regional autonomy is negligible: MEPs' primary loyalties are to the party in London and regional party branches are largely irrelevant to politics in the EP.

The next section of the article gives a brief review of parties and territoriality, followed by an elaboration of the two hypotheses. In the empirical analysis, drawing on party regulations and interview data, the hypotheses are assessed against the three

dominant statewide parties in Britain – Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. Empirically, the stratarchical party hypothesis is supported by formal indicators of regional autonomy. However, when it comes to policy development, the unitary party prevails, supported by a cohesive parliamentary group and close liaison with (albeit not instruction from) London. Stratarchy is restrained from unfolding, first, by the hegemonic status of national party unity and, secondly, by the disadvantages of "going it alone" for regional branches in the EP. On the latter point, an interesting parallel can be drawn to the way in which subnational authorities relate to EU institutions.

PARTY ORGANISATIONS AND TERRITORIALITY

In the development of European unitary states, parties and the nation state were intimately connected.[2] Parties typically organised around a strong territorial centre alongside political authorities. Party development also reflected the emergence of a national political space in which new social groups were mobilised and structured around basic political cleavages (Rokkan 1970, Caramani 1996). This centripetal logic was further strengthened by the rise of welfare states in the twentieth century, reducing territorial diversity through public intervention and redistribution (Rokkan and Urwin 1982). Over the last two decades, regionalisation in several European states has nuanced the notion of unitary parties and engendered a new avenue of research. While territorial allocation of power in parties has often been addressed in the literature on federalism (Truman 1955, Riker 1964, Hrbek 2004), more recent studies have widened the debate from federal to regionalised states and drawn parallels between them (Deschouwer 2003, Hopkin 2003, Chhibber and Kollman 2004, Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010).

Empirical studies have found that party reform in response to regionalisation is often gradual, incremental and affected by contextual factors such as leadership and electoral success. According to developments in Belgium and Spain, party structures respond, but often belatedly, to regionalisation or federalisation (Swenden 2002, Fabre 2008). These are characteristics which are also recognisable in Britain (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Bratberg 2010). Nevertheless, much clarification remains in order to account for party reform in response to the emergence of a regional level of government. Does decentralisation of power within parties follow directly from the creation of regional legislatures? Moreover, what can explain the differences in the way parties respond?[3]

In the relatively thin literature on the impact of European integration on national parties, organisational change is seen as limited (Mair 2006, Poguntke et al. 2007), the process elite-driven and relatively inconsequential for the mass membership (Raunio 2002). British parties, likewise, have only made minor organisational changes in response to European integration (Geddes 2006, Carter and Ladrech 2007). Bringing the regional level into these analyses should be conducive to a better understanding of party change. Particularly useful to research on multi-level parties would be a clear account of the allocation of power between party sections at the regional, national and European level. Empirical research should include not only the *national-regional* and the *national-European* dynamic, but also the *regional-European* relationship. The present article directs the attention precisely towards the interaction between the regional and the European branches of British parties. To the extent that regional party branches enhance their autonomy from statewide parties in European policy making, this contributes a new dimension to both the regionalisation and Europeanisation debates in the literature.

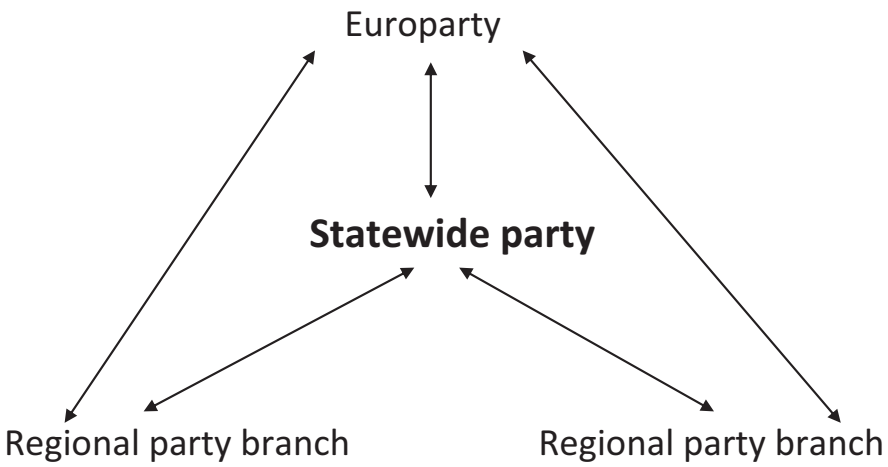
THE STRATARCHICAL AND THE UNITARY PARTY: TWO RIVAL HYPOTHESES

The potential for internal conflict in parties represented at several territorial levels has been a common topic in research on multi-level parties, including devolution in Britain (Holmes 2007, Laffin et al. 2007). It has also been a topic in research at the European level (Gaffney 1996). Devolution and European integration may be seen as concurring pressures on parties to allocate power and control away from the centre. Reform of party structures may thus enhance the autonomy for MEPs as well as for regional party branches. The multi-level party could be tentatively defined as *a party organisation with multiple lines of accountability and a division of authority between relatively autonomous party sections below and above the national level*.[4] While the national level remains the hub of the multi-level party, regional branches have obtained extensive autonomy to match the territorial structure of the polity. Moreover, MEPs should be expected to supplement their accountability to the statewide party with loyalties to the regional branch as well as to the relevant Europarty.

The **stratarchical party hypothesis** brings out the full implications of the multi-level party by predicting extensive decentralisation and delegation of authority. According to this view, representative institutions at different territorial levels require innovation and diversification, upon a platform of consensus on shared ideas (Carty 2004). A unitary message at all elections could be counter-productive, especially when faced with the competition from ethno-regionalist parties (van Biezen and Hopkin 2006:15). Regionalisation of elections should also enable regional branches of the party to establish a more direct relationship with EU institutions, particularly towards the EP group to which the party adheres (Tatham 2008). Where regional constituencies are applied for EP elections, lines of

accountability could bypass the national core of the party to run directly from the MEPs to their regional party branch (figure 4.1).[5]

Figure 4.1: The party as a multi-level organisation



There are certain organisational preconditions for direct links between the regional and European level to emerge. The stratarchical party hypothesis would assume:

- extended regional autonomy over *candidate selection* for EP elections
- distinctly regional profiles in *party manifestos* for EP elections
- enhanced (including financial) regional responsibility for the electoral *campaign*
- *policy development* in a direct relationship between MEPs and the regional party branch

The second and alternative hypothesis would be that a strengthening of the territorial levels below and above the nation state has had little effect on the parties. Given the limited effect on British parties of *both* European integration and devolution (Hopkin and Bradbury 2006, Carter and Ladrech 2007), one could expect the interaction between the two processes to be relatively inconsequential. While hesitant in decentralising power at home, parties have also been cautious towards the European party associations, attempting to "serve as the principal gatekeepers within the European electoral arena, and hence seek(ing) to monopolise access and to dominate the agenda" (Mair 2000:38). This confirms the perception of a national political space with unified external representation, akin to the view that member states are the building blocks in the EU (Hepburn 2008). It also corresponds to how subnational authorities have channelled their interests through shared British positions rather than lobbying EU institutions alone (Bulmer et al. 2006). This statewide party approach I define as the **unitary party hypothesis**. Two possible causes could be suggested here: organisational reform could be slow and incremental in response to changes in the party's environment, with the stickiness of past arrangements (that is, the unitary party of the past) leaving a lasting stamp (Panebianco 1988, Pierson 2004); or, parties could place strong emphasis on the ideal of national unity in Europe, which will leave little room for reform towards autonomy for regional branches. Empirical indicators of centralisation would be:

- candidate selection on the basis of statewide approved lists
- a statewide manifesto for EP elections
- electoral campaign directed by the statewide party
- policy development under the ultimate command of the statewide party

These hypotheses and the accompanying set of indicators are aimed as a conceptual elaboration of multi-levelness, that is, how parties respond to the legislatures at the European and the regional level. Regionalisation of the parties' European policy could, in the longer term, serve to consolidate territorial differentiation at home. In Britain, the implications would be of importance for the party system, which may fragment into different systems for Scotland and Wales, and for the statewide institutions in London, where a federal role for the Houses of Parliament is a possible scenario (Lynch 2007, Bogdanor 2003).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The following section of the article presents the empirical analysis evaluating the two competing hypotheses and drawing on data from a series of semi-structured interviews with party staff in all the three parties and supplemented with party regulations. Interviews were mainly conducted with the top executive level (general secretary, chairman etc.) in the regional party branches and also included personnel with special responsibility for candidate selection and campaigns (Appendix). The interviewees were asked to provide concise information on the relevant indicators and in addition state their general views on how the relationship between the regional party branch and MEPs was perceived within their party. In addition to party staff, two previous MEPs were interviewed on the balancing between regional, national and European concerns in their EP parliamentary group. The following analysis looks particularly at the internal allocation of power with regard to EP elections but will also take into account the ongoing liaison between Scottish and Welsh party branches and their MEPs. While elite interviews with party executives may not reveal the full extent of

informal channels of policy influence, they do give a precise picture of how candidates are selected, campaigns financed and manifestos formulated. The *informal liaison* in the form of contact patterns between MEPs and regional party officials and parliamentarians is only tentatively analysed here and clearly merits a separate study, for which the present article could provide a suitable backdrop.

Candidate selection

How candidates are selected reflects the control over representation in a party and is therefore a useful indicator of internal changes resulting from territorial reform (Gallagher and Marsh 1988, van Biezen and Hopkin 2006:17). The selection of EP candidates changed considerably in all the British parties with the introduction of regional constituencies in 1999. Transforming the system of single-member constituencies to one based on party lists carried an obvious potential for central intervention. This was most clearly prevalent in Labour, where a selection board nominated by the NEC was given the task of picking and rank-ordering candidates for the lists from a pool of regionally proposed candidates. The process was particularly important as Labour's large EP group would be sharply reduced with the introduction of proportional elections coupled with a loss of electoral support. The party leadership took the opportunity to eliminate a number of MEPs who had been critical to ideological moderation in the party under Tony Blair (Wring et al. 2000). Candidate selection for the EP also coincided with the controversial nomination processes for the first elections to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, where Labour was again accused of NEC-initiated exclusion of candidates on ideological grounds (Laffin et al. 2007:93-95). The

other two parties chose ostentatiously democratic methods in 1999, by letting a broadly composed selection board in each region draw up a shortlist of candidates whose rank-order was then voted over by the regional party members. Since the one-off venture in 1999, Labour has converged towards the two other parties. This left the following procedures in place for the EP elections of 2009:

In *Labour*, incumbent MEPs are re-selected as the first candidates of the list, provided that a majority of the constituency parties in the region endorse their candidacy. Applicants for the remaining candidacies are assessed by the regional executive, where a shortlist is ratified and divided in a male and female list. An all-member ballot first decides the rank-order of the incumbent candidates – who are placed on top of the list – and then ranks the new candidates, who are zipped (male-female-male-female) to obtain gender equality. The agreed list of candidates equals the total number of MEPs from the region (Carter and Ladrech 2007:69). Scotland and Wales are no different from English regions in terms of procedures. The important fact to observe in light of devolution is that Scotland operates its own separate list of approved candidates maintained by the Scottish executive committee. The party in England and Wales shares a pool of approved candidates. These lists are overlapping for Westminster, devolved and EP elections: a candidate can be applicable to all three. The number of candidates opting for Europe is however considerably lower than for Westminster and devolved elections.

The Conservative Party has procedures similar to Labour but without the default priority for incumbent candidates and with a more limited practice of gender equality. As in Labour, Scotland operates a separate list of approved candidates. These will be eligible for devolved, Westminster and EP elections depending on the preferences of the individual

candidate. Candidates from the approved list are invited to apply and are then assessed by a regional meeting of constituency chairs and senior party representatives who draw up a shortlist of candidates which is then subject to an all-member ballot. Incumbent MEPs are automatically included on the shortlist – however, they are not placed on top of the list by default, as this is for the regional meeting to decide. The candidates are then rank-ordered by an all-member postal ballot, the only remaining pre-requisite being that the highest available position should go to a woman.

In the *Liberal Democrats*, candidate selection for all elections is devolved to the parties in Scotland, Wales and England. In the English party, responsibility for the EP candidate selection process is delegated further to regional party branches. Scotland, Wales and England have separate lists of approved candidates: transfer between the lists is easily arranged for Westminster and EP elections but involves a brief additional assessment for devolved elections, particularly in Scotland (Bratberg 2010). For European elections, the Scottish and Welsh executives are responsible for agreeing a shortlist of candidates corresponding to the number of seats in the region. Such a shortlist is not required by the party´s regulations: in fact it was omitted for the 2009 EP election in both Scotland and Wales due to the low number of applicants.[6] The regional selection committee organises an all-member postal ballot to rank-order the list. Prior to the ballot, the candidates are presented in a small number of hustings across the region. Incumbent MEPs are given no default priority on the list and are thus subject to the ballot on the same basis as new candidates.

In sum, in all three parties, there is very little in the sense of centralised control over candidate selection in Scottish and Welsh party branches. I therefore conclude that on the

surface, the indicator of candidate selection seems to fit well with the stratarchical party hypothesis. However, if the hypothesis is taken to imply a privileged position for Scotland and Wales compared with English regions, the results are far less convincing. Except for the fact that the Scottish party branch in all three parties administers its separate list of approved candidates, the selection process as such is decentralised to the executive and members of each electoral region. Decentralised control over candidate selection is in itself an interesting finding, as party lists and electoral regions arguably give a higher scope for control from the centre than the system of single-member constituencies which otherwise prevails in Britain. Yet, apart from the 1999 arrangements in Labour, candidate selection has been strongly devolved to the regional branches, and from these branches to the individual members, much like selection for devolved elections. The list of approved candidates is separate in Scotland and (in Labour and the Conservative Party) shared for England and Wales, leaving little scope for formal intervention from London over candidatures. One often encounters in the literature the idea of national party control. According to Hix (2002:696), "it is the principals that control candidate selection (the national parties) who ultimately determine how MEPs behave": likewise, Raunio (2000:221) contends that "procedures for candidate selection ensure that most MEPs will remain loyal to their national parties". These assessments focus exclusively on the relationship between the national level and the Europarty. However, when regional party branches are taken into account the picture in Britain is one of regional empowerment rather than control by the statewide parties.

EP electoral manifestos and campaigns

Analysing the process behind manifestos for European elections is far from straightforward. As members of broader Europarties, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are committed to the shared policy framework established at the European level, while the Conservative Party has enjoyed a larger margin of manoeuvre due to its semi-detachment from the European People´s Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED) coalition.[7] The statewide manifesto of all three parties is slightly modified to allow for distinctive emphases in Scotland and Wales.

Labour exemplifies this territorial filtering down process with particular clarity. A member of the Party of European Socialists (PES), Labour takes the agreed PES document (to which its own MEPs have contributed) as a basis. To finalise Labour´s own manifesto, the party leadership in London is squarely in charge, mirroring the tradition in Labour of ensuring central control over the manifestos for Westminster elections (Minkin 1992:6, Carter and Ladrech 2007:73). Ratified by the NEC, the manifesto is then adapted to separate versions in Scotland and Wales. According to Colin Smyth, general secretary of Scottish Labour:

> *The party as a whole is signed up to the PES manifesto, and that will form the basis of the UK manifesto. The British Labour Party will take those pledges and apply them to a UK context. It is natural that, for campaigning purposes, we will have a separate Scottish version of that document which will highlight those issues and policies that are most relevant to Scotland. This will be signed off by the executive of the Scottish Labour Party, but it will be fundamentally based on the documents from the PES and then from British Labour.*[8]

With regard to the campaign itself, there will also be adaptation in Scotland and Wales – reflecting, for example, the particular importance of agriculture and fisheries as EU-related issues in Scotland. Compared with the electoral manifestos, however, it is far less obvious that the Scottish and Welsh deviate more from a putative London message than do the nine electoral regions in England.[9] In terms of finances, the Scottish and Welsh branches contribute to the EP campaign, but less so than at devolved elections. If there is any aspiration in Scottish and Welsh Labour of using Europe to strengthen their autonomy, this is hardly visible with regard to electoral campaigns.

In *the Conservative Party*, manifestos for EP elections are developed by a committee headed by the shadow foreign secretary. The final document is ratified by the shadow cabinet. Compared with manifestos for Westminster elections, EP elections allow broader influence for MEPs, particularly through the delegation leader and deputy in the EP (Carter and Ladrech 2007:74). The Scottish and Welsh versions of the manifesto will be adapted versions, reflecting not different policies for different parts of the country but the commonly agreed leeway to highlight what the party finds particularly relevant in either Scotland or Wales.[10] To formulate these revisions is a task for the Scottish and Welsh party boards. As in Labour, the regionalised manifesto is normally introduced by a senior figure in the party. Interestingly, compared with devolved elections, there is less of an emphasis on distinct Scottish or Welsh issues for the EP manifesto and campaign.[11] Consequently, there is little deviation from the shared British template.

The Liberal Democrats are a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), from which the basic points of it EP manifesto are taken. Developing the manifesto for EP elections remains a top-down process, guided by the party leadership in

London, with the shadow foreign secretary and the deputy leader playing prominent roles (ibid.). The final manifesto is ratified by the Federal Policy Committee. Except for the fact that MEPs are more extensively consulted in relation to EP manifestos, the process is essentially the same as the one for Westminster elections (Ingle 2000:193). From the perspective of the regional branches, distinguishing itself from the British line is seen as inconsequential if not counter-productive. This is seen both in manifestos and campaigns. While campaign funding and strategy is mainly generated in Edinburgh and Cardiff, the key messages emanate from the British party. Regional variation, again, amounts to framing a message adapted to regional interests, a logic which applies to English regions as well. According to Martin Hayman, chief executive in the Scottish Liberal Democrats:

> *It is emphasis not policy that will be different. Moreover, one Scottish MEP is not going to change party policy on Europe. It is a case of having five bullet points that are highlighted for Scotland rather than a policy of our own.*[12]

In sum, then, regional autonomy over manifestos and campaigns is present but limited in all the three parties. A general assessment of manifestos and campaigns places the British parties somewhere between the stratarchical and the unitary party. Scottish and Welsh party branches develop and ratify their own versions of the EP manifesto, something which distinguishes them from the English regions, where no such adaptation is possible. However, given that this room for manoeuvre has led to no substantial policy deviation, there appears to be little beyond symbolic value in the separate manifestos produced in Scotland and Wales. In terms of financing and managing the campaigns, again, the Scottish and Welsh

party branches again enjoy more autonomy than English regions but compared with the practice in electoral campaigns for the Scottish and Welsh legislatures, autonomy at European elections is less significant.

Policy development

The final indicator to be considered is the extent to which regional party branches are involved in policy development by drawing upon direct links with their MEPs. Research on the EP tends to focus on the potential tension between parties at the national level and the Europarty groups in the EP (Ladrech 2007:950). MEPs commonly enjoy considerable autonomy from their national parties. Exceptions may occur where legislation of particular national importance enters the EP agenda and/or parties in government wish to coordinate with policies promoted through the Council (Raunio 2000:221, Messmer 2003:202). The observation that a party whip (be it from London, Edinburgh or Cardiff) would be considered illegitimate is confirmed by interviews in all three parties. Carter and Ladrech (2007:76-78) refer to *high autonomy* and *low accountability* as characteristics of MEPs. National parties are poorly supplied with either sticks (such as re-selection, which is for the regional parties to decide) or carrots (such as EP committee assignments, which pertain to the Europarty groups). In the absence of strict accountability, policy coordination and consultation form the basis of the relationship between MEPs and their home parties. What role do the regional party branches play in this respect?

Of the three statewide parties, *Labour* has the most elaborate system of contact between MEPs and London. Drawing on its link system, Labour´s spokespersons on the various policy areas in the EP are invited to cabinet-level teams working on policy

development in London (Messmer 2003). Although the substantial impact of the link system should not be overestimated, it clearly ties MEPs closer to government policy making as influence is exchanged against consultation.[13] From Scotland and Wales, no similar link system is entertained by the party apparatus or the subnational authorities. Moreover, there are no staff resources in Scottish Labour dedicated specifically to the EP or liaison with MEPs. On the other hand, MEPs do take part in policy-making processes in both Scotland and Wales. According to Scottish general secretary Colin Smyth:

> *In terms of party structure, it is not fundamentally different from how it works for Members of Parliament (MPs) or Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). There is an MEP in the Scottish executive, in the Scottish Policy Forum which establishes policy for the Scottish Parliament – and in the joint liaison committee which meets occasionally to bring together all the parliamentary groups representing the party in Scotland.*[14]

Similar arrangements are also present in Welsh Labour, which distinguishes Scotland and Wales from regional party branches in England. The fact that MEPs are formally included in domestic policy processes gives considerable influence, considering the low number of MEPs compared to their counterparts in the Scottish and Westminster Parliaments. When it comes to influence by regional branches upon their MEPs, however, there is little indication of Scottish and Welsh Labour trying to impact the work of their MEPs. Rather, it was repeatedly emphasised in interviews that decisions and voting in the EP falls back on internal deliberation in the EP group and consultation with the national party rather than with

regional party branches: there is not a separate European policy process for Scottish or Welsh Labour.

The Conservative Party has developed a pattern of contacts between MEPs and London broadly in line with Labour´s link system, but less formalised – and, crucially, not developed in government. In most policy areas, the party´s spokespersons in the EP will be in regular, informal contact with the relevant frontbench team in Westminster. This also involves occasional participation in the weekly meetings of the different policy teams in Westminster. With regard to communication with Scotland and Wales, different arrangements are in place. In Wales, a weekly telephone meeting unites the party´s Welsh MPs and AMs with its single MEP. The Scottish party branch has less regular liaison between the levels, drawing upon regular information briefings from the two MEPs and a broad range of informal contacts, also running via the Scottish Parliament´s information office in Brussels. At the more formal level, in both Scotland and Wales, the MEPs are represented at the regional executive as well as in the front-bench teams formulating policy for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. With regard to European policies, the policy focus driven by committee assignment in the EP was stressed by interviewees. Scottish interests are mainly seen in the focus on sectoral interests such as agriculture and fisheries. MEPs are encouraged to see a Scottish dimension also through their exposure to policy-making processes at home. Nevertheless, decision making in the EP is seen predominantly, if not exclusively, through the prism of the statewide party, and liaison with regionalist parties from other member states to promote the EP's regional dimension has not been on the regional branches' agenda.

The Liberal Democrats have a short history in the EP, winning its first two seats in 1994. However, with the electoral reform in 1999, its representation has risen to twelve MEPs in the 2004-09 parliament. Liaison between the EP group and the party leadership in London remains non-formalised, but there are extensive contacts between spokespersons and frontbench teams in the shadow cabinet, mirroring the arrangements in the Conservative Party. With regard to Scotland, a weekly telephone conference unites MPs and MSPs with the Scottish MEP. In the 2004-09 parliament there was no Liberal Democrat MEP from Wales. A single MEP gives little scope for ambitious policy promotion on behalf of the Scottish party branch – moreover, when acting in the EP the conception of national party unity has a strong hold also on the Liberal Democrats. In anticipation of votes in Brussels, there is a close liaison not only with Westminster but with the Federal Policy Committee of the party. The state parties in Scotland and Wales will typically be indirectly informed. This is a revealing example of how internal party democracy in the Liberal Democrats in the context of EU issues means conferring policy issues to the statewide party rather than regional branches – despite the autonomous position of the latter in domestic policy. Thus, in the EP context, Scotland and Wales are primarily electoral regions. Where representation does matter, is in bringing substance to the international credentials of the Scottish party branch. According to chief executive Martin Hayman:

> *It is essential that we have the opportunity to look more widely than the Scottish context... [I]t is essential to our profile that we have a voice in Europe, someone who can speak on our behalf – and also authoritatively here in Scotland – from a European angle.*[15]

In sum, it is clear that representation in the EP does matter to regional branches in all the three parties. However, the importance attached to regional MEPs is very rarely reflected in policy choices deviating from the national line. This is confirmed by voting data from the 2004-2009 parliament showing great correspondence between Scottish and Welsh MEPs and MEPs from English regions with regard to loyalties towards the statewide party groups in the EP.[16] Scottishness and Welshness thus becomes more an issue of role conception than one affecting voting and policy output. Interviewees in all three parties stressed the opportunity for tending to particular policy areas, exemplified by the focus on agriculture and fisheries characteristic of Scottish MEPs.[17] While such emphasis is useful for highlighting regional interests within the party, it does not set Scottish or Welsh interests apart from the rest of Britain or stimulate alliances with regions in other EU member states. Policy development is predominantly an activity for the Europarty group, supported by liaison between MEPs and their statewide parties. With regard to policy development, the three British parties thus operate largely in concord with the unitary party hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

Devolution, according to Wayne David MP, *"provides the opportunity for people to be parochial, inward-looking, introspective. But it also gives them the opportunity to be outward-looking, externally oriented – embracing not just Welsh solutions to Welsh problems but also what we can learn from the best of Europe"*.[18] While engagement with Europe may be a touchstone of much political discourse, the form that engagement should take remains disputed in Scotland and Wales, with lofty visions of a "Europe of the regions" co-existing

with mundane references to the EU in domestic policy debates (Haesly 2001, Hepburn 2006, Preston 2008).

This article has focused on the Scottish and Welsh branches of three British parties in light of two competing ideal types, the stratarchical party and the unitary party. The indicators assessed in the analysis present an interesting pattern. On *candidate selection*, all three parties come close to the stratarchical party hypothesis: selection is completely devolved to the electoral regions – in Scotland, furthermore, party branches administer a separate list of approved candidates. With regard to *EP electoral manifestos*, these fall between the stratarchical and the unitary: manifestos are presented as separate documents in Scotland and Wales, yet differing in style and emphasis rather than content from the British manifesto. *Electoral campaigns*, meanwhile, are largely devolved and thus guided by distinct regional strategies, as predicted by the stratarchical party hypothesis.

On these elements of formal power, then, the statewide British parties have granted Scottish and Welsh party branches considerable autonomy on EU affairs in line with the conception of stratarchy. It is on the fourth and final indicator, that of *policy development*, that the stratarchical party hypothesis does not hold sway. In all three parties, policies in the EP are largely worked out in the dynamic between the MEPs and the Europarty, with the occasional intervention of the statewide party leadership. MEPs are committed to policies laid down in the statewide manifestos and also by rewards and penalties directed by the Europarty in the EP. In the formal activity of voting, as well as the informal process of responding to events, the statewide party and the Europarty trump the regional party branch. Interestingly, this seems to be no less the case in the Liberal Democrats than in Labour or the Conservative Party, despite the former´s federal constitution.

Table 4.1: Unitary vs. stratarchical: results on four indicators of autonomy in the Scottish and Welsh party branches

Candidate selection	Stratarchical
EP electoral manifestos	Semi-stratarchical
EP campaigns	Stratarchical
European policy development	Unitary

Thus, formal stratarchy does not in itself lead to factual regional autonomy. In the theoretical section, two possible causes were mentioned in support of the alternative, unitary party hypothesis: organisational reform could be late and incremental, with structures reflecting previous centralised arrangements; or, a strong conception of national party unity in Europe could prevail. The empirical analysis shows that organisational structures can hardly account for the statewide focus of the MEPs: indeed, as discussed above, organisational reform has been sufficient for Scottish and Welsh party branches to operate more autonomously in Europe. What has restrained a more ambitious use of this autonomy is in part the conception of party unity and in part strategic concerns. First, national party unity remains a hegemonic principle in parties operating on the European scene, as seen in the subordination of Scottish and Welsh MEPs to statewide strategies and policies. Secondly, from a strategic point of view, given the small number of MEPs from each region, it is clear that more leverage can be obtained by addressing regional interests through cohesive EP party groups.

The largely domestic focus of research on multi-level parties marks an interesting contrast to the public administration literature, which has seen vigorous debates on the dynamic between regional autonomy and enhanced European integration (Jeffery 1997, 2000, Marks et al. 2002, Moore 2007). With subnational authorities invited to engage more directly with EU institutions during the 1990s, concerns were raised that these could

"undermin(e) the role of national governments acting as gatekeepers to resists unwanted policy initiatives from Brussels" (Bache et al. 1996:297). Empirical research has shown that expectations for regional empowerment were overstated: regional interests are acknowledged to a greater extent than before, but largely channelled through national governments (Jeffery 2000). In the British case, Scottish and Welsh subnational authorities find that their views are best promoted through privileged access to member-state representation rather than "going it alone" by liaising with the Commission or the Council (Bulmer et al. 2006). The parallel to the dynamic between regional party branches, national party and Europarties is incisive: what the findings in the present article suggest is that the way in which parties adapt to multi-level politics mirrors regional representation in Europe *per se*. In the British case, the "Europe of regional party branches" hence remains a vision unlikely to prevail against the hegemonic status of national party unity and the difficulty of autonomous action in the EP.

APPENDIX

Interviews conducted for the article

- Wayne David, Labour MP for Caerphilly, London 24 November 2008.
- Brian Duggan, campaign officer (EPLP), Labour, London 25 November 2008.
- Joanne Foster, chief executive, Welsh Liberal Democrats, telephone 10 March 2009.
- Norman Fraser, selection convener for the European elections, Scottish Liberal Democrats, telephone 24 February 2009.
- Martin Hayman, chief executive, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Edinburgh 19 February 2009.
- Chris Huhne, Liberal Democrats MP for Eastleigh, London 25 November 2008.
- Rachel Maycock, assistant for the EPLP in the Prime Minister's Office, Labour, London 25 November 2008.
- Mark McInnes, party director, Scottish Conservative Party, Edinburgh 20 February 2009.
- Andrew Reeves, deputy director of campaigns, Liberal Democrats, telephone 13 December 2008.
- Chris Roberts, general secretary, Welsh Labour, telephone 27 March 2009.
- James Temple-Smithson, head of the MEPs' London Office, the Conservative Party, London 24 November 2008.
- Colin Smyth, general secretary, Scottish Labour, Glasgow 20 February 2009.

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NOTES

[1] The Scottish Parliament (with primary legislative and limited tax-varying powers) and the National Assembly for Wales (with secondary legislative and no tax-varying powers) were established subsequent to referenda in 1997 and were first elected in 1999. Northern Ireland, due to its particular historical and political context, is not investigated further in this article.

[2] In federal systems, the relationship between party unity and national integrity is more complex. Riker´s (1964) view that party structures mirror the constitutional structure of the (federal) state has remained relatively uncontested. In Britain, the unitary party model has largely prevailed; the federalised structure of the Liberal Democrats (and the preceding Liberal Party) and the semi-autonomous status of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Scotland are exceptions to this rule.

[3] Here, theoretical refinement could also clarify how party adaptation is not a simple question of centralised vs. decentralised allocation of power but involves different *forms* of detachment and varying strategies for regional empowerment (Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010, Thorlakson 2009).

[4] While the multi-level party can be analysed in organisational terms, it can also be approached by way of multiple (and conflicting) discourses and identities, as shown by Moon (2008).

[5] A clear inspiration for the bypass thesis can be found in the public administration literature, where direct interaction between EU institutions (primarily the Commission) and autonomous governmental agencies has been theorised and researched (Egeberg 2006).

[6] In Wales, the number of applicants and seats (four) corresponded perfectly. In Scotland, the number of applicants just exceeded the number of seats (seven), but all were nevertheless admitted to the all-member ballot.

[7] The Conservative Party was an allied member of the EPP-ED until the 2009 EP election, after which the party broke the alliance to take part in the newly created European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECRG). Whether the new group will require tighter coordination of the manifestos is doubtful, as the ECRG has been explicitly formed to counter the federalist ambitions of the EPP-ED.

[8] Colin Smyth, interview with author, 20 February 2009.

[9] Rachel Maycock, interview with author, 25 November 2008.

[10] James Temple-Smithson, interview with author, 24 November 2008.

[11] Mark McInnes, interview with author, 20 February 2009.

[12] Martin Hayman, interview with author, 20 February 2009.

[13] As stressed by several interviewees, the link system has been developed and practised only with Labour as a governing party. How it will be adapted in opposition (for example, whether it will be organised along the briefs of shadow secretaries rather than cross-departmental policy areas) is unclear.

[14] Colin Smyth, interview with author, 20 February 2009.

[15] Martin Hayman, interview with author, 20 February 2009.

[16] Loyalty scores of all roll-call votes in the sixth parliament (2004-09) show that MEPs from Scotland and Wales have a similar propensity as MEPs from English regions to support the majority view of (i) the statewide party and (ii) the Europarty. In each of the cases, moreover, the statewide party commands somewhat more support than the Europarty: this is most prevalent in the Conservative party, but even here the difference is relatively small (average values for Conservative MEPs are 88,5% support of statewide party's majority view vs. 73,6% for

Europarty majority). I am grateful to Bjørn Høyland, Dept of Political Science, University of Oslo, for supplying the data for these estimates.

[17] In the sixth parliament, five of Scotland´s seven MEPs held EP committee assignments on regional development (C 12), agriculture and rural development (C 13) and/or fisheries (C 14).

[18] Wayne David was Welsh MEP and leader of the PES group 1994-98 and has since 2001 been MP for Caerphilly. Interview with author, 24 November 2008.

Hostages to exceptionalism? Party politics and the Scottish abolition of tuition fees

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the diverging policies of England and Scotland since 1999 on the issue of tuition fees. While the UK Parliament has introduced (and henceforth enhanced the level of) tuition fees for students at English universities, the Scottish Parliament has refuted fees in two successive stages. In this article I trace the political processes leading to divergence, followed by a comparative analysis of the relevant parliamentary debates. I find that while all the three statewide parties have differed internally between arguments promoted in London and Edinburgh, Labour stands out as the party with the highest thematic consistency. The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, are distinctive in highlighting the chance to chart a separate course for Scotland. Finally, despite the diverging policy tracks of London and Edinburgh, there is a trend towards convergence between the legislatures in the thematic focus of debates. The article finishes by reflecting upon the challenges posed by policy divergence – to parties and to public policy provision – in a regionalised state such as Britain.

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INTRODUCTION

The creation of subnational legislatures increases the potential for policy divergence within the borders of the state. Such divergence represents in many ways what decentralising reform is for: encouraging innovation and enhancing regional responsiveness (Sturm 2006:156). However, divergence also raises a number of dilemmas. Differences in welfare provision may counter the requirement that social citizenship be reflected in equal rights across the state (Craig et al. 2008). Moreover, the cohesiveness of statewide political actors is put to the test in the face of territorial divergence. Parties, in particular, must work out a balance between allowing for internal diversity and ensuring that overall unity is retained. The dilemmas of policy divergence are exemplified by higher education policy in Britain since *devolution*, the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a National Assembly for Wales in 1999. While the UK Parliament has introduced and henceforth enhanced the level of tuition fees for students at English universities, the Scottish Parliament has refuted the principle of fees; first by replacing them with a redistributive graduate endowment, then by abolishing student payment altogether in 2008.[1] The issue of tuition fees has served to highlight the divide between the supposedly market-oriented England and the left-leaning politics in Scotland; the Scottish debate has furthermore been nurtured by what is perceived to be a distinct academic tradition.

In this article I recapture the processes leading to diverging tuition fees regimes in England and Scotland. Secondly, through an analysis of key parliamentary debates in London and Edinburgh, I investigate whether Anglo-Scottish divergence is reflected in the rhetoric of each of the statewide parties. The intention is not to give a causal account of why different policies on tuition fees have emerged. Rather, I seek to establish *what ideas and arguments*

have been raised in each of the legislatures. Does the issue of tuition fees reflect a conflict of ideas between London and Edinburgh? More specifically, to what extent is *internal* divergence discernible in each of the parties, and what implications may this have for their cohesiveness as statewide political actors?

The analysis reveals that although all the three statewide parties differ between London and Edinburgh in their arguments on fees, Labour is by far the most consistent due to its sustained emphasis on social justice and enhanced university funding. Arguments from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats are found to differ more between London and Edinburgh; the Liberal position is furthermore distinctive in emphasising the opportunity to chart a separate course for Scotland. Finally, while the policy processes have led to Anglo-Scottish divergence over tuition fees, overall there is a tendency towards *convergence* between the legislatures in the thematic focus of the debates. This is driven, it is hypothesised, by the acknowledgement of challenges which are shared by policy makers in higher education across Europe. The next two sections of the article trace the policy trajectory of tuition fees in the UK Parliament (Westminster) and the Scottish Parliament (Holyrood) respectively. Part four accounts for varying ideological positions towards fees for higher education. In part five, qualitative content analysis is applied to map the arguments used by parliamentarians from Labour, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats in the two legislatures. The article concludes by revisiting some of the dilemmas posed by decentralising reform, to party cohesiveness as well as to the users and providers of higher education.

THE PATH TOWARDS (VARIABLE) TUITION FEES – LONDON

Britain, like most West European countries, went through a considerable widening of access to higher education during the four decades from 1960 onwards (Greenaway and Haynes 2003:150). Meanwhile, public investment in universities did not match the growth rates of student numbers, a fact which became increasingly obvious under the Conservative governments from 1979 to 1997. Since 1962, a system of public grants covering full-time students had been in place to help young people through higher education. Under this regime, undergraduates paid no fees for tuition, and their living costs were covered by a mix of means-tested maintenance grants, social security and parental contributions (Callender 2006:106). In 1990, loans for students' living costs were introduced, available to all full-time students through the Student Loans Company (SLC) at a real interest rate of zero. At the same time, maintenance grants were frozen and then gradually cut in the succeeding years.

The tuition fees debate started from the acknowledgement that both universities and students were underfunded and that recruitment of students from poorer families remained stubbornly low (Barr 2003:371). Introducing tuition fees proved to be one of the most controversial policies of the Labour government in office from 1997. Indeed, the second step of reform in 2003-04 would come closer than Iraq to ending Tony Blair's premiership prematurely (O'Leary 2007:468). The point of departure was given by the Dearing committee (1997), whose recommendation was that flat-rate tuition fees be introduced to strengthen the funding of British universities. Fees would be covered by student loans with deferred repayment (collected subsequent to graduation through an added rate of income tax). Both the main parties had been evasive about higher education policy during the 1997 campaign. The Conservative Party were well too aware of the existing shortcomings in the

sector, while Labour was cautious not to raise the prospect of tuition fees for fear of losing its fragile support in the middle class (Stevens 2004:87). Furthermore, Labour was committed to retain Conservative overall spending for the first two years in government, and this self-imposed constraint became decisive for the further course of events.

In response to the Dearing Report, Labour announced its own plans for tuition fees which differed radically from Dearing's recommendations (Newall 2008:137). Rather than opting for fees with deferred repayment, the government introduced fees of £1,000 a year to be paid up front (i.e. when entering a university course). This reduced the requirement for public funds in the short term; however, access for poorer students had to be supported by wide-scale means-testing of fees, which reduced the effective income for universities (O'Leary 2007:472). The burden to student finances was increased by the fact that remaining maintenance grants from the 1990 reform were abolished. From 1998, loans provided the only universal measure of public support to students. The reform was carried through by the government, with the Liberal Democrats voting against the bill and the Conservatives abstaining.

The perception of failed reform laid the grounds for the process which ensued between 1998 and 2004. Under a regime which satisfied neither universities nor students, David Blunkett, education secretary until 2001, wavered between acknowledging the need for enhanced university finances and opposing an American-inspired system of variable fees. A dominant view in Labour was that paying tuition fees up-front was holding back working-class participation. Charles Clarke, Blunkett's successor from 2002, was adamant that a transition must be made from up-front fees to a system of deferred contributions. This was initially interpreted as support to Gordon Brown's favoured alternative of a graduate tax

(Peston 2005:313). However, when Clarke's scheme was presented in a White Paper in January 2003, it was in the form of variable tuition fees, to be covered by student loans.[2]

The White Paper was followed by fierce political debate, culminating in the Higher Education Bill, which boomeranged between the two Houses of Parliament before finally receiving the Royal Assent on 1 July 2004. The Act affirmed that universities would be permitted to charge variable fees limited to £3,000 per year. Fees would be covered by loans at zero interest rate, with repayment starting as the graduate's salary reached £15,000. A wide array of bursaries for students from low-income families was introduced to placate internal opposition in Labour: furthermore, the Office for Fair Access was established to ensure equitable recruitment (Woodhall and Richards 2008:198-99). Yet, at the second reading in the House of Commons, the government won by the knife-edge margin of five votes from a majority of 160: the majority was ensured by 46 Scottish Labour MPs voting with the government, even though the reform would not apply in Scotland.[3] The debate over top-up fees largely became an internal Labour struggle: the Liberal Democrats had been consistently against tuition fees in all forms, while the Conservative opposition had suggested a number of policies on tuition fees between 2001 and 2005 but ended up voting against the bill in Parliament (O'Leary 2007:477,481).

FROM FREE EDUCATION TO GRADUATE ENDOWMENT AND BACK – EDINBURGH

Subnational autonomy has prepared the ground for party systems in Scotland and Wales which differ significantly from the bipartisan logic of Westminster. The rejuvenated Scottish National Party (SNP), now the governing party in Edinburgh, promotes a territorial agenda

while also tilting the political debate to the left. The same pattern, although less clear-cut, appears with Plaid Cymru in Wales. In both territories, the significance of nationalist parties is enhanced by the proportional electoral system which encourages genuine multi-party politics to emerge (Paterson et al. 2001, Lynch 2007). As a result, Labour must pursue policies in Scotland and Wales which are acceptable to the left *and* perceived as sufficiently Scottish or Welsh (Greer 2004:11). Indeed, Scottish policy divergence has been seen as reflecting a more left-leaning political culture – universalist in its approach to public services and egalitarian in its view of social justice (Keating 2005b:458). The debate on tuition fees is highly relevant in this regard: the Scottish university tradition is typically portrayed as egalitarian and open towards local communities in contrast to the more elitist and specialised institutions in England (Humes 2008:69; cf. Davie 1961).

In education policy, Holyrood controls the entire system from primary school to university, a power which extends to decisions on fees. Devolved responsibility for higher education is a well-known characteristic of regionalisation. Nevertheless, the autonomy acquired by Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales in this regard is extensive in a European context (Paterson 2001:142). The issue of tuition fees was immediately raised in Edinburgh subsequent to devolution: the committee created to look into the issue became the first public inquiry commissioned by Holyrood (Newall 2008:132). Published in late December 1999, the Cubie report proposed that up-front tuition fees be abolished in Scotland. The preferred alternative to tuition fees was a so-called graduate endowment to be set aside for bursaries to students from low-income families (Woodhall and Richards 2008:193). Social inclusion, especially in the form of robust maintenance grants for poorer students, was a centrepiece of the report.

The graduate endowment which was subsequently introduced drew upon the Cubie committee but was also a compromise within the Labour/Liberal Democrats coalition. With the exception of Labour, there was consensus among all parties in Edinburgh on the abolition of fees (Parry 2002:315-16). Labour had campaigned to retain the means-tested tuition fees introduced in Westminster for all British universities in 1998. The Liberal Democrats had ardently opposed this policy: the endowment landed between the two alternatives, acknowledging that students should contribute but avoiding fees in the form of payment for university courses. The governing coalition ensured the passage of the bill through Holyrood, in the face of SNP and Conservative opposition. The new scheme was effectuated from the academic year 2001-02, requiring graduates (with some exceptions) to pay the endowment of £2,000 through an addition to their student loan. Payment would commence when earnings reached £10,000; later, this sum was raised to £15,000. The endowment was presented as progressive due its obvious redistributive element and the fact that payment would begin only when students were on a steady salary (Woodhall and Richards 2008:193). Moreover, the reform meant that more government expenditure could be spent on research and infrastructure as students themselves would help finance poorer students through the endowment.

Scottish higher education has hardly operated in a world of its own since 1999. Many of the pressures faced by Scottish universities are shared across the UK, and much of the political agenda has been set by London. Yet with regard to tuition fees, Holyrood has chosen an alternative path to that of Westminster. Neither up-front tuition fees nor the second step of variable fees with deferred repayment has found any resonance north of the border. In 2003, the second coalition agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats

pledged not to introduce the top-up fees which was now on the agenda in Westminster: all parties in Scotland were opposed to the course of the Labour government in London (Keating 2005a:431). Rejecting tuition fees had been a statement of free higher education; the endowment was not a fee but a gesture of solidarity between richer and poorer students. However, there was widespread concern that the regime was not working as intended. Only a small proportion of students from low-income families were exempted from paying the £2,000 endowment. Meanwhile, at the opposite end of the scale only a small number of students paid the endowment directly: most chose to pay alongside their student loan, meaning that the endowment fund remained stagnant. To neutral observers it was not obvious that the Scottish model was more socially progressive than a system of rigidly means-tested tuition fees; neither did it bring the extra funds to universities which had been at the core of the debate in England (Woodhall and Richards 2008:194-95).

The combined assessment of these aspects of the graduate endowment led to the next dramatic turn in the fees saga in Scotland: on 28 February 2008 Holyrood ratified legislation initiated by the SNP government abolishing the endowment altogether.[4] At this stage, the government leant on the support of the Liberal Democrats, while Labour and the Conservatives opposed abolition. According to the latter parties, an independent review would give a better foundation for reform. Abolishing the endowment would mean an increase in state expenses towards bursaries, which could lead to a reduction in government funding for teaching and research. Moreover, as the income stream from tuition fees remained closed in Scotland, the funding gap between Scottish and English universities was likely to increase over time.

IDEOLOGY, PARTY POLITICS AND THE ISSUE OF TUITION FEES

Assessing tuition fees is difficult on the basis of a conventional left/right dimension. Free higher education provided by the state is a position recognisable from Scandinavian welfare states. Yet in liberal economies with a class bias in higher education and a clear career benefit from university degrees, tuition fees could be portrayed as progressive. The provision will be they are means-tested and that financial support is awarded to poorer students. In the English context it has thus been argued that free higher education implies that "the taxes of the hospital porter pay for the degree of the old Etonian" (Barr 2003:274). Rather than subsidising the middle class, is the argument, public services should be targeted towards the needy. However, the bias in recruitment is more pronounced in England than in Scotland, where the student population is larger in proportion and more equally distributed across class. Following this logic, one could argue that introducing means-tested tuition fees is a plausible centre-left strategy in England (although a risky one, given that Labour support also includes a considerable section of the middle class). In Scotland, meanwhile, higher education has acquired such a universal character that tuition fees would be damaging even to traditional supporters of the left (cf. Ansell 2008:190-91).

There is clearly some validity in these predictions given the state of the English and Scottish educational systems and the class composition of party support. However, the realities of tuition fees reform are complex and cannot be projected from a crude assessment of winners and losers. First, higher education not only yields an individual benefit but also delivers required competence to the nation and could be perceived on this basis as worthy of public funding. Secondly, views about tuition fees are also part of a wider

debate concerning public services, where different welfare regimes provide contrasting criteria for what is politically and morally sustainable (Esping-Andersen 1996, Rothstein 1998). For example, irrespective of whether free higher education is a privilege for the middle class, it may be seen as part of the collective responsibility for high-standard public services (Keating 2005b:458). Thirdly, the university sector itself could make the case for higher funding with far less concern for the cost allocation between students and the state (and between different categories of students). The question then becomes which party takes the universities' side.

In the context of Westminster, Labour in government has been consistent promoters of fees for higher education alongside widening recruitment and strengthening research funding. The Conservative Party has since the mid-1990s differentiated itself from Labour in suggesting that public expenses to higher education should be reined in, university autonomy increased and further student expansion met with caution. However, firm policy commitments have been limited, and the party has since 2005 moved closer to Labour in accepting top-up fees and wider recruitment (O'Leary 2007:481). The Liberal Democrats have occupied a position slightly to Labour's left on many issues of welfare provision and the public sector more generally (Russell 2005). The party was consistent in opposing fees and has promoted higher education free at the point of use, with a higher rate of income tax to cover the deficit in university funding. In the 2010 election manifesto, the commitment to abolition of fees was watered down due to the fiscal consequences of recession.

Behind these UK-wide cleavages there are divisions that are particular in Scotland. Scottish education policy balances between separation from the London agenda and a number of shared developments, such as the rise of management ideals and tightening

constraints on public funds (Gillies 2008:86-87). Disagreement on education policy has been more abrasive in the past: Labour saw education as a battleground for egalitarianism and social justice while the Conservative Party was the party for selection, individual ambition and institutional autonomy. In Scottish Labour, the self-perception is one of radicalism and authenticity in implicit contrast to the statewide party. In practice, this differentiation has only had minor policy consequences (Hassan 2004). The Scottish Conservatives have obtained enhanced autonomy within the party since 1997 and have worked to develop a Scottish dimension to Conservatism, more communitarian and conscious of the more collectivist orientation north of the border (Lynch 2003). The Scottish Liberal Democrats have taken the role as defenders of meritocracy, protective of the public sector but more permissive than Labour of local autonomy and variation. Readily installed as a federal party prior to devolution, the Liberal Democrats have opted for decentralised decision making and tight communication between the Scottish and Welsh branches (Bradbury 2006). In Scotland, the SNP has been located within the broad Lib-Lab consensus in education policy, adding its own flavour by relating collectivist solutions to a distinct Scottish patriotism (Gillies 2008:84-86). The next section of the article looks closer at how parties have argued for their positions in parliamentary debates over tuition fees in Westminster and Holyrood.

IDEAS IN CONTEXT: PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES IN WESTMINSTER AND HOLYROOD

The parliamentary debates over tuition fees offer useful comparative data, as comparison can be drawn over time, between parties and between the statewide parties in London and the subnational party branches in Scotland. The intention with the empirical analysis was to

map the arguments applied within each of the legislatures in relation to tuition fees. This was done by way of qualitative content analysis, a method which strikes a middle way between two of the most widely used methods for textual analysis; quantitative content analysis and discourse analysis (cf. Hardy et al. 2004). Quantitative content analysis is conducted by measuring the frequencies of relevant words or phrases in carefully defined texts (Krippendorf 2004). Counting and comparing implies that meaning is seen as constant and detached from context; while this method results in high reliability, validity may suffer as structures that guide how ideas are communicated and received in a given context are left in the dark (Bergström and Boréus 2000:78-84). On the opposite side, in discourse analysis, counting is discouraged and texts are primarily approached as part of a larger body of cultural practice (Fairclough 2003). Although discourse analysis has considerable virtues, reliability is one of its weaker points. Indeed, discourse analysts have often taken care to distance themselves from criteria such as validity and reliability by contending that empirical research is an inherently interpretive exercise.[5]

Qualitative content analysis seeks to avoid the limitations of both these approaches to text. Ideas or arguments rather than specific words or phrases are registered. Moreover, their frequency is only one aspect of the analysis; just as important is a careful assessment of why given ideas are significant and how they match established patterns in a wider historical context. Typical data may be political debates where all parties involved draw upon inherited ideological positions which form the basis for addressing new political issues. For the present analysis of debates on tuition fees, the coding proceeded from a preliminary reading of transcripts from the relevant parliamentary exchanges in Westminster and Holyrood. From

this initial study, I constructed an analytical scheme summarising the dominant arguments. Eight significant themes were found to be prevalent (Table 5.1):

Table 5.1: Dominant themes in parliamentary debates over tuition fees

	Theme	**Typical argument(s) in debates**
1	Social justice and recruitment of poor students	The proposal marks a significant step forward in recognising the needs of students from poor families.
2	Attraction to *all* students	The new funding arrangements will make it more difficult to attract students across the social scale.
3	University needs	The higher education sector is in urgent need of funds for teaching and research to maintain their standards.
4	Higher education as individual investment	A university degree is an investment towards future job and income.
5	Implications for welfare state	Charging tuition fees is another step towards the marketisation of public services / We should (should not) fund higher education from general taxation / Student support should (should not) be universal in kind.
6	Implications for universities	Tuition fees will enhance the requested autonomy/flexibility for universities / Fees will aggravate the distinction between first- and second-class universities
7	Effectiveness of arrangement	Too much money will be lost in administering the system / Tuition fees are the most effective way of raising funds.
8	Scottish distinctiveness	Scotland has its own tradition of education and welfare / Devolution gives the opportunity to chart a separate course from London.

This framework was then applied to map the arguments in the most significant parliamentary debates preceding each piece of legislation. In Westminster, these were the second readings of the Teaching and Higher Education Act (16 March 1998) and Higher Education Bill (27 January 2004). In Scotland, the equivalent debates were on the Graduate Endowment Bill (27 January 2000) and the Graduate Endowment Abolition Bill (28 February

2008).[6] To exemplify how the analytical scheme was applied, consider the following statement by Paul Holmes, Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament (MP) for Chesterfield, in the Westminster debate on 27 January 2004:

> *Variable fees will deter low-income students. Even more important, as many Members have said, variable fees will mean that students who go to university will not make choices based on their academic ability—as they should—but on their ability to pay. They will attend the cheaper universities.*

In this textual segment two arguments were coded: the negative effect on *recruitment of poor students (1)* and the negative *implications for universities (6)* in encouraging a two-tier, hierarchical system. The aggregate results from the coding of arguments from the debates are shown below (table 5.2). The arguments which were categorised through this process cover the thrust of the debates. Significantly, all categories (with the possible exception of the fees-supportive statement that education is an individual investment (4)) were plausible both *in favour of* and *in opposition to* tuition fees. A Labour representative would, for example, be able to argue for the introduction (or increase) of tuition fees by emphasising that students from poorer families would not have to pay. This is important, as the analysis aimed to highlight *which themes* were dominant rather than which parties were for or against the principle of fees, which has already been reviewed above. What is quintessential there is to what values and priorities arguments from each of the parties were related. Moreover, the analysis aims to consider whether there are systematic differences between parliamentarians in Westminster and their party colleagues in Holyrood.

Table 5.2: Allocation of arguments: parliamentary debates in Westminster (1998/2004) and Holyrood (2000/2008) on the issue of tuition fees

			Labour	Cons	Lib Dems	SNP[7]	*Total*
1	Social justice and recruitment of poor students	Westminster	34% (45)	19,5% (22)	14% (8)	N/A	25% (75)
		Holyrood	34,5% (20)	8% (2)	28% (10)	24,5% (15)	26% (47)
	W/H difference		*-0,5*	*11*	*-14*		*-1*
2	Attraction to *all* students	Westminster	24% (32)	18,5% (21)	23% (13)	N/A	22% (66)
		Holyrood	24% (14)	36% (9)	33% (12)	29,5% (18)	29% (53)
	W/H difference		*0*	*-17,5*	*-10*		*-7*
3	University needs (more funds to maintain quality)	Westminster	19% (25)	14% (16)	17,5% (10)	N/A	17% (51)
		Holyrood	21% (12)	24% (6)	8% (3)	1,5% (1)	12% (22)
	W/H difference		*-2*	*-10*	*9,5*		*5*
4	Higher education as individual investment/ benefit	Westminster	6% (8)	9% (10)	5% (3)	N/A	7% (21)
		Holyrood	5% (3)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2% (4)
	W/H difference		*1*	*5*	*5*		*5*
5	Implications for welfare state (taxation, targeting etc.)	Westminster	9,5% (13)	9% (10)	17,5% (10)	N/A	11% (33)
		Holyrood	7% (4)	16% (4)	14% (5)	28% (17)	16,5% (30)
	W/H difference		*2,5*	*-7*	*3,5*		*5,5*
6	Implications for universities (autonomy, flexibility etc.)	Westminster	6,5% (9)	17,5% (20)	8,5% (5)	N/A	11% (34)
		Holyrood	3,5% (2)	4% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1,5% (3)
	W/H difference		*3*	*13,5*	*8,5*		*9,5*
7	Effectiveness of fees arrangement	Westminster	1% (1)	12,5% (14)	14% (8)	N/A	7,5% (23)
		Holyrood	1,5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	3% (2)	1,5% (3)
	W/H difference		*-0,5*	*12,5*	*14*		*6*
8	Scottish distinctiveness	Westminster	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Holyrood	3,5% (2)	8% (2)	17% (6)	13% (8)	10% (18)
	SUM		*100% (133+58)*	*100% (113+25)*	*100% (57+36)*	*100% (61)*	*100 % (303+180)*
	Average difference		*1,4*	*10,9*	*9,2*		*5,6*

General empirical patterns

As reflected in table 5.2, there are a few general differences between the debates in Westminster and Holyrood which should be noted. First, while the Westminster debates were particularly concerned with the recruitment of *poor students* (1), arguments in Holyrood were more oriented towards the *attraction of all students* (2). Protecting poor students from the burden of fees was a dominant theme in Westminster: in Holyrood, the debate was more about protecting the student population as such. Moreover, the Westminster debates placed a larger emphasis on the *implications for universities* in terms of autonomy, flexibility etc. (6). Here, the concern for competitiveness, within Britain and beyond, was a much more visible feature in Westminster. Another theme where Westminster initially scored higher was *university funding* (3), but this argument rose to equal prominence in the second of the two debates in Holyrood when it was grasped by Labour and the Conservatives. Finally, in Scotland, the *implications for the welfare state* (5) were a prevalent theme, due to the recurring reference to free public services among the ranks of Liberal Democrats and Scottish Nationalists.[8]

With regard to developments over time, there are further interesting patterns to observe. In the Westminster debates, Labour MPs reduced the overwhelming emphasis on student welfare in the 1998 debate to delve more into the consequences for the university sector in 2004. The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats conduct a shift of focus from poor students to *all* students, encouraged by the effects of variable fees on students from the middle class. In Holyrood, there is a movement over time both among Labour and Conservative MSPs from student welfare to the needs of the university sector (thus echoing Labour development in Westminster). The Liberal Democrats and the SNP, meanwhile,

moved towards a stronger focus towards implications for the welfare state and the underlying philosophy of public services.

In order to measure development over time, the parliamentary debates could be paired, comparing 1998 vs. 2000 and 2004 vs. 2008. The results in terms of internal party differences are similar to the aggregate pattern of table 5.2, with the partial exception of the Liberal Democrats where the Westminster/Holyrood contrast was greater in 1998/2000.[9] It should be noted that the debates do not fully correspond since rather different proposals for student payment were debated on each of the occasions. The contrast in proposed legislation is largest in the second pair of debates; while the bill in Westminster in 2004 concerned *extending* tuition fees, in Holyrood four years later the issue was about *abolishing* the graduate endowment. Nevertheless, it is possible with some caution to draw a set of observations about broader developments in the debates. Seemingly, the focus on attracting all students across social class has become more widely shared by the two legislatures. This is reflected in the shift of focus in Westminster from poor students in 1998 to all students in 2004, closing the gap with debates in Holyrood where wide access has been consistently emphasised. Moreover, the issue of implications for universities has become a more widely shared concern over time, and here it is the exchange in Holyrood which has caught up with an established pattern in Westminster. Overall, the pattern is one of modest *convergence* in the focus of debates if one compares 1998/2000 with 2004/2008. This is a significant finding which could reflect that as devolution comes of age, maturity entails similar focus and awareness about shared challenges. The financial state of the university sector is an obvious example of concerns which are shared by parliamentarians in Westminster and Holyrood alike.

Comparing the parties

Overall, the Labour groups in Westminster and Holyrood are considerably more consistent than their Conservative and Liberal Democrat counterparts with regard to thematic focus. Labour MPs and MSPs score high on recruitment of poor students and on university funding, and relatively high on attraction to all students: on all three accounts, the proportion is remarkably stable in each of the two legislatures.

Labour

The leading party in Westminster throughout the period and in Holyrood until the 2007 election, Labour has played an essential part in the debates over tuition fees from 1997 onwards. Labour stands out as the party with the most consistent focus on poor students. Arguments about the recruitment of students from low-income families were the main line of defence in both the first and second phase of tuition fees reforms in Westminster: meanwhile, it was also the focus of the *attacks* against the reforms from the party's back benches. In Holyrood, Labour's parliamentary group defended the proposed graduate endowment in 2000 and voted against its abolition in 2008, on both occasion without internal dissent. For all the differences between the debates, categorisation of the arguments applied by Labour MPs and MSPs shows a remarkable convergence in what priorities were claimed to matter most to the party: the effect on wider recruitment of students. A typical example of the progressive case for student payment was raised by Malcolm Chisholm, Labour Member of Holyrood (MSP) for Edinburgh North and Leith, who stated in the debate on 27 January 2000:

> *Labour has the primary objective of widening access to higher education, in particular for those from low-income backgrounds who would not have gone to university in the past. This is the point that people who praise the old funding arrangements should remember. Those arrangements did not deliver that wider access for students from low-income backgrounds. I am, therefore, delighted that today's package restores a measure of grant to such students. That is the best thing about the package.*

Apart from the concern for wider recruitment, Labour's position as governing party is reflected in arguments about university finances; the introduction of fees is portrayed by MPs as the difficult, but right decision for the longer term. References were also made to the goal of attracting *all* students (thus evading the focus on low-income background), but on this argument, Labour parliamentarians were outnumbered by Conservative and Liberal counterparts. Interestingly, only rarely did arguments concern the significance of universal welfare provision: Labour arguments in favour of the graduate endowment (Holyrood) and either in favour of or opposing tuition fees (Westminster) focused upon the effect on widening recruitment. In Westminster, some reference was made to wider issues of the welfare state. Lynne Jones, MP for Birmingham Selly Oak, exemplified this focus when she stated in the 1998 debate:

> *What is wrong with returning to the principle of a progressive taxation system that pays for the welfare state? I do not accept the argument, which grew over the Thatcher years, that we cannot afford the welfare state. We are a far richer country than we were when the welfare state was established. Productivity has increased and*

our national wealth has grown. If we do not pay through taxation, we have to pay by some other means.

Labour arguments overall reveal an overall consistency in focus, across time and between the two legislatures. However, it must be acknowledged that shared priorities do not necessarily entail corresponding political views. A concern with social justice could imply support or opposition to the proposed legislation in Westminster: one may note, for example, the statement by the Secretary of State, Charles Clarke preceding the 2003 debate, where social justice and university funding were the two recurrent themes. The analysis of Labour shows that centre-left arguments are located in similar categories across the territorial divide. The empirical substance, however, has diverged increasingly over the decade passed since devolution.

The Conservative Party

Interestingly, the Conservative Party shows a much larger difference than Labour between arguments raised in each of the legislatures. In Westminster, recruitment of *poor* students, attraction to *all* students, university finances and the wider implications for the university sector all received considerable attention in the debates. Meanwhile, in Holyrood, less focus was directed towards recruitment of poor students and more towards the general attraction to students and the (increasingly difficult) state of university finances. The latter point was particularly prevalent in the 2008 debate, where it was the dominant reason that the Conservatives rejected the SNP's abolition of the graduate endowment. What the Conservative Party and Labour both requested was a committee of inquiry to consider the

future financial state of Scottish universities in the new competitive environment with England.

Conservative arguments about the implications for universities were much more prevalent in Westminster. To a large extent this concerned the insufficient freedom for universities. Reference was made to the American experience with "a great variety in the quality, level and types of higher education" driven by autonomous universities operating in a market system".[10] A similar pattern of party arguments was found in the debate over the Higher Education Act 2004. According to Tim Yeo, MP for South Suffolk and Shadow Education and Health Secretary, nobody were to "fantasise that the Bill opens a door to more independence for universities; it does precisely the opposite. It brings all universities under tighter political control than ever before. It will inflict damage on our universities, including those that aspire to be world class."

In Westminster, attention was shared between poorer students and the concern for all students; there was a move between the 1998 to the 2004 debate, where the burden of payment on the middle class would be larger. Conservative MPs were now concerned with the squeeze of the middle classes, who were neither poor enough to be helped by the grants being introduced nor wealthy enough to rely upon family aid. In Holyrood, by contrast, the concern for all students rather than a focus on the poorer section was consistent in Conservative arguments throughout the 2000 and 2008 debates. The party also drew in doubt the effectiveness of the regime, arguing that too much money would be spoilt in the bureaucracy and loan arrangements. Enhanced autonomy was again the key Conservative concept to restore the excellence of English universities.

The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats have been the most consistent of the three statewide parties in its opposition against tuition fees and arguments for improving university's dire financial state through a higher rate of income tax. Arguments were neatly distributed between concerns for low-income students and for those from the middle class. The Liberal Democrats were portrayed as the party of students and of a traditional approach to the welfare state. This position could easily be extended to a concern for public services more generally. At the time of the second reform in Westminster, it could thus be argued that variable fees would introduce yet another step in the alleged marketisation of public services. According to Phil Willis, Liberal Democrat MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough:

> *We all know that the Bill is not simply about higher education—the Prime Minister has been at pains to point that out. It is about changing the way in which this country pays for its public services. That is at the heart of it. The Bill is stage one of a process that will see responsibility for paying for child care, transport, and health and social care shift from general taxation to the individual.*

Interestingly, the question of university finances was consistently underplayed by the Liberal Democrats in debates in Holyrood. Similarly, implications for the universities were not a prevalent issue of concern. Liberal arguments in both legislatures related to the need to protect students and the pernicious consequences of marketised higher education. In Holyrood, this was combined with an emphasis on the need to strike a separate Scottish

path. Partly, this was justified as a way to render justice to subnational autonomy, partly to defy the perceived neoliberalism of the Labour government in London.

Scottish distinctiveness

In debates in Holyrood, the Liberal Democrats were alone among the three statewide parties in emphasising Scottish distinctiveness. According to this line of thought, it was Edinburgh's mandate to opt for a different policy than London in line with the path assigned by Scottish history and the will of its people. Conservative MSPs were unwilling to apply this argument, and in Labour it took the cautious form of designing Scottish solutions in line with its special needs. However, where Scottish distinctiveness is given its most effective form is, not unexpectedly, in the rhetoric of Scottish Nationalists. In the debate preceding the abolition of the graduate endowment in January 2008, Bill Wilson, SNP MSP for West of Scotland:

> *If most Scots or MSPs were asked what Scots can be most proud of and what marks us out above all else, I believe that they would say "Education." Scotland was the first nation to introduce comprehensive education. It had four universities by 1583 and free education for 100 years. What became of that proud heritage? It was squandered by new Labour and the first two Scottish Executives. A hundred years of free education was replaced by education for a price, and 100 years of access for all was replaced by education for the wealthy. A hundred years of principle was abandoned by New Labour. Today we can reclaim the proud traditions of Scotland and return to the fundamental principles of free education.*

Over the last decades, a reconstruction of Scottish political identity has appeared which integrates Scottish distinctiveness with opposition to allegedly neoliberal politics originating in London (Keating 2005b:458). Whether or not this distinction between London and Edinburgh stands up to scrutiny in policy terms, it has certainly had an impact on the identity construction and political rhetoric promoted within Holyrood (Mooney et al. 2008). It comes as little surprise that the SNP is the party most willing to integrate higher education into a broader narrative about its political project. In its perception of a social democratic contract with the Scottish people, the SNP links the ambition of social justice to Scottish independence as the fulfilment of Scotland's political identity (Scott and Mooney 2009:381-82). Interestingly, the Liberal Democrats, the only of the three statewide parties with a fully federalised structure consisting of England, Scotland and Wales, are also more comfortable with the idea of territorial divergence between the constituent parts of Britain. This has been confirmed by the party's policy and coalition strategies since 1999. To Labour, policy divergence is less of a virtue. As illustrated by the debates in Westminster and Holyrood, there is considerable agreement on what matters are most important to the party (such as the consequences for students from low-income families). To Labour, the issue at stake is not what values should be prioritised in each constituent territory, but rather how divergence can be delimited and contained to serve the purpose of overall cohesiveness. The Conservative Party hovers between these contrasting positions on devolution, uncomfortable with policy divergence but willing in practice to adapt its arguments and strategy to the political context.

That context, it should be noted, is different between London and Edinburgh. In Holyrood, the most significant feature of the decisive debates of 2000 and 2008 is the

remarkable consensus on the aims for Scottish higher education; the key division in the debates in 2000 and in 2008 ran between Labour and the SNP and concerned what measures would be most effective in ensuring access for students from all classes. This reflects a dynamic in Scotland where social inclusion and redistribution are increasingly central to the political rhetoric of both Labour and the SNP, the two leading forces in Scottish politics post-devolution.

CONCLUSION

Policy divergence could be seen as an inevitable consequence of autonomy; in Scotland and Wales, diverging policies since 1999 include areas such as health (Greer 2004), education (Keating 2005a) and housing (Stirling and Smith 2002). Divergence is a genuine product of subnational politics, where different political majorities cause different policy outcomes within the state borders. Any political party operating in this context confronts the task of coordinating positions and ensuring that unity of purpose is maintained (Deschouwer 2006). The entrenchment of centralisation in a context of subnational legislatures would go against the dynamic of territorial reform and could be electorally counterproductive. Meanwhile, autonomy cannot be stretched too far, for reasons of (ideological and organisational) cohesiveness as well as the implications for public policy.

In the area of higher education policy, devolution has given political clout to a Scottish distinctiveness in higher education which has been latent for centuries but lacked decision-making powers (McCrone 2008). Given its symbolic significance as a debate on public services, the issue of tuition fees is also useful to analyse the wider implications of subnational autonomy. Scottish autonomy has indeed been accommodated in different

ways by each of the statewide parties. Labour faces the classic dilemma of social democratic parties on the question of territorial reforms (Keating 2004). How should social justice and redistribution be operationalised when politics is devolved from the nation state? Interestingly, in the case of higher education, Labour has acknowledged diverging preferences across regions yet maintained a consistent thematic focus, highlighting the situation for poorer students and the need for government intervention. The Conservative Party reflects the pragmatic adaptability where concerns, values and strategies shift with political context but the loyalty towards the broad middle class is maintained. The Liberal Democrats, finally, are the most explicit champions of diversity within a federalised Britain. This is also the party where Scottish distinctiveness finds its natural place.

What are the longer-term effects for public policy when subnational legislatures are created? Interestingly, in the British case, while polices on tuition fees have diverged since devolution, the focus of parliamentary debates has *converged* over time. Student recruitment across class and implications for universities (funding and flexibility) are themes which appear to be increasingly shared by parliamentarians in Westminster and Holyrood. This is the paradox of subnational autonomy: while policies diverge, the concerns and thematic foci are increasingly similar. Convergence reflects an acknowledgement that London and Edinburgh are faced with shared challenges and constraints. Moreover, these shared challenges also generate the expectation that on tuition fees, converging *policies* will also (re)emerge. Different regimes for tuition fees represent a challenge both to users and providers of public services. Difficulties are created for student mobility, as different fees arrangements now exist for students crossing the internal borders between England, Scotland and Wales. Moreover, financial equity is under attack as English universities race

away with the aid of income from fees (Newall 2008, Trench 2008). Under the prevailing fiscal arrangements, Scotland receives less public funds from London by default as financing of higher education in England becomes less and less a responsibility for the public purse (Keating 2005a:433). Whatever the outcome of this development, the tuition fees debacle shows that parties have an essential role to play in managing divergence. Arguably, the integrative function of parties is relevant on two different dimensions: maintaining their own cohesiveness as statewide organisations and ensuring consistency between policies in constituent parts of the state. Britain is a case where these challenges are likely to increase in a harsher financial climate: more reflection, academic and political, will thus be required in the years to come.

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NOTES

[1] In Wales, the power to decide on tuition fees was only devolved to the Welsh Assembly in 2004. Thereafter, fees were first abolished then reintroduced in 2005 but in a sharply modified form which includes a universal grant to all Welsh students in Wales covering about two-thirds of the fee. The trajectory in Wales will not be further analysed in this article.

[2] Deferred repayment implies that loans are offered at zero interest rate (controlled for inflation), with repayment commencing once the graduate has reached a basic threshold, then calculated as a percentage of the salary and subsiding after a given number of years (e.g. 25), if the entire loan has not been repaid. The alternative to this subsidised loan arrangement is a regular mortgage-type loan with fixed term payments.

[3] The five SNP and 10 Liberal Democrat MPs voted against the bill, as did five Labour MPs and the independent George Galloway. Three Labour MPs, including Robin Cook, abstained. See 'Scots MPs attacked over fees vote', BBC 27 January 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/3432767.stm accessed on 14 December 2009. The 72 Labour representatives who voted against the Second Reading of the bill equalled the largest second-reading rebellion on a bill by government MPs since the Second World War (Cowley and Stuart 2005:23).

[4] See 'MSPs vote to scrap endowment fee', BBC online 28 February 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/7268101.stm accessed on 11 December 2009.

[5] See Bevir and Rhodes (2002) for a useful summary and Angen (2000) for a critical review of this position.

[6] Parliamentary Hansard from Westminster was accessed on 6 February 2010 at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/vo980316/debtext/80316-09.htm and http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmhansrd/vo040127/debtext/40127-06.htm#40127-06_head1**.** Parliamentary report from the Scottish Parliament was accessed on 8 February 2010 at http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-00/or040601.htm and http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialreports/meetingsparliament/or-08/sor0228-02.htm#Col6487.

[7] SNP arguments from Westminster are omitted due to the limited number of interventions by its MPs.

[8] The *effectiveness of tuition fees* in raising funds (7) was more debated in Westminster, certainly as an argument against Labour's proposed legislation. However, effectiveness was also a central part of SNP's case for abolishing the fees. In the 2008 debate, it was prevalent in the ministerial statement by Fiona Hyslop (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning) preceding the debate.

[9] Comparing the 1998 vs. 2000 debates, the average Westminster/Holyrood difference in frequency of arguments is 4,7 for Labour, 14,5 for the Conservative Party and 14,7 for the Liberal Democrats. Similar numbers for the 2004 vs. 2008 debates were 3,1 for Labour, 15,7 for the Conservative Party and 6,9 for the Liberal Democrats. The tables are not included in the article due to the limited space available.

[10] Robert Jakcson, Conservative MP for Wantage, 16 March 1998.

Appendix 1

Interviews conducted for the research project "Multi-level politics and party change"

	Name	Party	Position	Context	Date	In person	Telephone	Email
1	Barrett, Lorraine	Welsh Labour	AM for Cardiff South and Penarth	Article 2	24 April 2008			X
2	Bates, Mick	Welsh Liberal Democrats	AM for Montgomeryshire	Article 2	10 April 2008		X	
3	Chapman, Christine	Welsh Labour	AM for Cynon Valley	Article 2	9 May 2008		X	
4	Clwyd, Ann	Welsh Labour	MP for Cynon Valley	Article 2	1 April 2008	X (London)		
5	Crabb, Stephen	Welsh Conservatives	MP for Preseli Pembrokeshire	Article 2	9 April 2008		X	
6	Cuthbert, Jeff	Welsh Labour	AM for Caerphilly	Article 2	28 April 2008		X	
7	David, Wayne	Welsh Labour	MP for Caerphilly	Article 2	24 June 2008		X	
8				Article 3	24 Nov. 2008	X (London)		
9	Davies, Paul	Welsh Conservatives	AM for Preseli Pembrokeshire	Article 2	8 February 2008		X	
10	Duggan, Brian	Labour	Campaign Officer, EPLP	Article 3	25 November 2008	X (London)		
11	Foster, Joanne	Welsh Liberal Democrats	Chief Executive	Article 3	10 March 2009		X	
12	Fraser, Norman	Scottish Liberal Democrats	Selection Convener for the European Elections	Article 3	24 February 2009		X	
13	Griffiths, John	Welsh Labour	AM for Newport East	Article 2	29 April 2008		X	
14	Hayman, Martin	Scottish Liberal Democrats	Chief Executive	Article 3	19 February 2009	X (Edinburgh)		
15	Huhne, Chris	Liberal Democrats	MP for Eastleigh	Article 3	25 November 2008	X (London)		
16	Jones, Carwyn	Welsh Labour	AM for Bridgend	Article 2	14 May 2008		X	
17	Jones, Lyndon	Welsh Conservatives	Chairman	Article 1	1 February 2008	X (Cardiff)		
18	Kaye, Robert	Conservatives	Special Adviser on Devolution	Article 1	16 January 2008	X (London)		
19	Kennedy, Roy	Labour	Director of Finance and Compliance	Article 1	15 January 2008	X (London)		
20	Maycock, Rachel	Labour	Assistant for the EPLP in the Prime Minister's Office	Article 3	25 November 2008	X (London)		
21	McInnes, Mark	Scottish Conservatives	Party Director	Article 3	20 February 2009	X (Edinburgh)		
22	Moon, Christian	Liberal Democrats	Deputy Head of Policy and Research	Article 1	16 January 2008	X (London)		
23	Morgan, Jonathan	Welsh Conservatives	AM for Cardiff North	Article 2	19 May 2008		X	
24	Öpik, Lembit	Welsh Liberal Democrats	MP for Montgomeryshire	Article 2	27 March 2008		X	
25	Peters, Stephen	Scottish Liberal Democrats	Chair of Campaigns and Candidates	Article 1	29 January 2008	X (Edinburgh)		
26	Quinn, Lesley	Scottish Labour	General Secretary	Article 1	30 January 2008	X (Glasgow)		
27	Randerson, Jenny	Welsh Liberal Democrats	AM for Cardiff Central	Article 2	1 February 2008	X (Cardiff)		
28	Reeves, Andrew	Scottish Liberal Democrats	Deputy Director of Campaigns	Article 3	13 December 2008		X	
29	Roberts, Chris	Welsh Labour	General Secretary	Article 1	31 January 2008	X (Cardiff)		
30				Article 3	27 March 2009		X	
31	Smyth, Colin	Scottish Labour	General Secretary	Article 3	20 February 2009	X (Glasgow)		
32	Stephenson, Andrea	Scottish Conservatives	Operations Co-ordinator	Article 1	30 January 2008	X (Edinburgh)		
33	Stoneham, Ben	Liberal Democrats	Headquarters Director	Article 1	15 January 2008	X (London)		
34	Temple-Smithson, James	Conservatives	Head of the MEPs' London Office	Article 3	24 November 2008	X (London)		
35	Walton, Ian	Welsh Liberal Democrats	Party Manager	Article 1	1 February 2008	X (Cardiff)		
36	Williams, Kirsty	Welsh Liberal Democrats	AM for Brecon and Radnorshire	Article 2	29 April 2008		X	
37	Williams, Mark	Welsh Liberal Democrats	MP for Ceredigion	Article 2	6 May 2008		X	
38	Williams, Roger	Welsh Liberal Democrats	MP for Brecon and Radnorshire	Article 2	1 April 2008	X (London)		
39	Willott, Jenny	Welsh Liberal Democrats	MP for Cardiff Central	Article 2	2 April 2008	X (London)		

Acronyms

AM Member of the National Assembly for Wales
MP Member of Parliament
EPLP European Parliamentary Labour Party

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTY OFFICIALS (ARTICLE 1)

LONDON/EDINBURGH/CARDIFF (JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2008)

Purpose: gain information about allocation of powers (and changes in these over time) with regard to (i) candidate selection, (ii) the formulation of electoral manifestos and (iii) funding of electoral campaigns in the devolved elections in Scotland and Wales of 1999, 2003 and 2007. *[Note: differences over time, differences between Scotland and Wales]*

General issues

1. On a dimension between *centralisation* on the one hand and stratarchy or *decentralisation* at the opposite extreme, where would you say that the party is placed today? (Where would you place your party as compared with the two other dominant parties?)

2. To what extent has there been a change over time along this dimension? If such change has occurred, how is this to be explained?

3. To what extent has federalisation of the party been a necessary consequence of devolution?

4. Would you agree that being in government in Westminster and/or Edinburgh and Cardiff is decisive to how distribution of power within the party has occurred?

5. To what extent has the party adapted over time to a devolved Britain? In the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between London and the devolved parties, are any general changes discernible between the elections of 1999, 2003 and 2007?

Candidate selection

Constituency candidates

1. To what extent has control over candidate selection been considered important by the party in London?

2. Is candidate selection, with regard to individual MSP/AMs today strictly an issue for the devolved parties?

3. Are candidate selection procedures for prospective MSPs and the AMs different from those regarding Scottish and Welsh MPs?

4. Have these procedures changed over time, i.e. in the period 1999-2003-2007?

5. Are there differences in how this has been handled in the Scottish and Welsh parties? If so, is this due to the regional parties themselves or subject to central command?

⇨ Nomination through screening to approved list
⇨ Short-listing in constituency (selection committee?)
⇨ Selection (executive committee or plenary OMOV?)

6. Where twinning of constituencies has been conducted, to what extent has this been conceived as a problem by the devolved parties?

List candidates

7. Have the arrangements for selecting list candidates changed over time? Are these the same in Scotland and Wales?

8. When and if list candidates have been decided upon by a committee from the national level, to what extent has this caused tension in the devolved parties?

9. With regard to candidate selection, on the dimension from centralisation to stratarchy, where would you place the party? (1-5) Compared with the other parties?

Formulation of electoral manifestos

10. Who is responsible for drafting the manifesto, and who holds the power of ratification?

11. To what extent is the full membership involved in this process?

12. Are there differences between Scotland and Wales in these respects?

13. To what extent does the formulation of devolved election manifestos differ from the process prior to (UK-wide) general elections?

14. On the dimension from centralisation to stratarchy, where would you place the party today?

15. Has there been any change over time in how the formulation of manifestos for devolved elections is organised?

Funding of electoral campaigns

16. How are the devolved parties financed? To what extent are they subject to centralised funding from London? [buildings, personnel…]
17. How are campaigns financed in the individual constituency?
18. For Scottish and Welsh constituencies, are these procedures the same for devolved elections as they are for general elections?
19. With regard to manifesto formulation, on the dimension from centralisation to stratarchy, where would you place the party?
20. Has there been any change over time in how electoral campaigns are financed?
21. To what extent do these arrangements differ from how English constituencies finance electoral campaigns?

Party culture, ideas and pragmatism

22. Back in 1999, how prepared would you say that your party was to decentralise power to its branches in Scotland and Wales?
23. To what extent would you say that the response of your party to devolution has been guided by an explicit consideration of the distribution of power between the national and devolved levels – as opposed to pragmatic adaptation?
24. What is the role of the ideological heritage of the party in this respect?
25. To what extent do you feel that your party differs from the other two in terms of how devolution has been handled? How do you explain this contrast?
26. Is there a sense of stability in terms of how devolution should be handled within the party? Is the 1999-2007period recognised by consolidation or a sustained potential for change?

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE: WELSH AMs AND MPs (ARTICLE 2)

CARDIFF + TELEPHONE (SPRING 2008)

Purpose: gain information about infrastructure for interaction – *individually* between AMs and MPs sharing constituency and party affiliation as well as *collectively* between Assembly and Westminster parliamentary groups. Moreover, investigate whether there is a perceived difference of *focus* and *prestige* between AMs and MPs and whether cross-level interaction through the party is seen as satisfactory today.

General issues

1. In your view, how has the party in general responded to devolution over the last decade?
2. To what extent have relations within the party changed over time, between the Welsh party and London?
3. In your view, how has the party's traditional policy towards devolution affected the internal relations between London and the Welsh branch since 1999?
4. Has the party's territorial organisation prior to 1999 affected how the structures for interaction between AM/MP arrangements have developed?
5. How do these debates affect your work in the constituency and the relationship with your AM/MP counterpart?

AM/MP dynamic

6. With regard to the parliamentarians, what relationship has emerged between the MPs and the AMs, formally and informally?
7. What collective arrangements have been created for policy exchange between the parliamentary groups in Westminster and the Assembly?
8. On an individual basis, how are tasks distributed between yourself and the Assembly Member from your own constituency?
9. On a practical note, how are constituency tasks distributed between the two parliamentarians in your constituency? Do you share an office there, and/or do you hold common surgeries?
10. Is there a potential for rival interests in how tasks and attention are distributed, or do you simply see a common interest in promoting the party?

11. In what ways does your role as parliamentary representative differ from your AM/MP counterpart?

12. To what extent does the AM/MP dynamic differ in a constituency where they are both from the same party as compared with one where they have different party affiliations?

Focus and prestige

13. Do you see any systematic difference between an AM and an MP in the way your constituency role is weighted against other parliamentary priorities (party political role, regional/national issues, sectional interests...)?

14. What do you see as the key differences between the way an AM and an MP operates in the Assembly/in Parliament?

15. On a collective level, are there any systematic differences (values, priorities) in your view between the parliamentary groups?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PARTY OFFICIALS AND MPs (ARTICLE 3)

LONDON/EDINBURGH/GLASGOW + TELEPHONE (NOVEMBER 2008-MARCH 2009)

Purpose: gain information about allocation of powers (and changes in these over time) with regard to (i) candidate selection, (ii) the formulation of electoral manifestos and (iii) funding and organisation of electoral campaigns for EP elections since the reforms to regional constituencies and the parallel creation of Scottish and Welsh legislatures in 1999. Examine the balance between subnational, national and European level of decision making, including process towards policy initiatives in the EP. *[Note: what differences between Scotland/Wales and other electoral regions?]*

PARTY OFFICIALS:

Candidate selection

1. How are prospective MEPs for the party selected?

⇨ Creation of list

⇨ Rank-ordering of list

2. What is the role of Scottish and Welsh party branches in this process?
3. What is the role of the statewide party?

EP electoral manifestos

4. Who *participates* in the process of developing the manifesto? Who holds the ultimate authority?
5. How is the cooperation with the European party affiliation managed?
6. Is there any scope for Scottish/Welsh deviation form the UK-wide manifesto?

EP campaigns

7. How are campaigns financed?

8. How are dominant messages formulated? To what extent are they generated or sanctioned by London?

European policy development

9. What is the role of MEPs in the party in general?
10. What arrangements are provided for communication between MEPs and statewide party or subnational party branches?
11. What arrangements are provided for communication with MPs or MSPs/AMs?
12. What procedures (formal and non-formal) exist in the party with regard to the running policy processes in the EP? To what extent is there a commitment in the party to liaise with statewide or subnational party in the course of these processes?
13. Are there conflicting logics within the party with regard to Edinburgh/Cardiff vs. London as MEPs' line of command?
14. Are MEPs given voting instructions at any time from either statewide or subnational party?
15. In Scotland/Wales: does the perception of a regional bench in the EP have any resonance at all (shared interest across parties)?
16. To the position of Scottish and Welsh MEPs, how important are regional representations in Brussels and the occasional participation of Scottish/Welsh ministers in the Council?

MPs:

17. What arrangements are provided (and what significance attached) for communication with the party's MEPs?
18. Is there a perception of Welsh and Scottish party branches by-passing Westminster in parliamentary work?
19. How do Westminster and EP representative roles differ? To what extent do they also entail different relationships to the party (statewide and subnational)?
20. To what extent is the EP perceived as an alternative career track? How does it differ in this regard compared with the subnational legislatures?
21. Do you perceive regional constituencies for the EP a good thing for representative democracy?